

まおゆう魔王勇者

② 忽鄰塔(クリルタイ)の陰謀 著/ 橙乃ままれ



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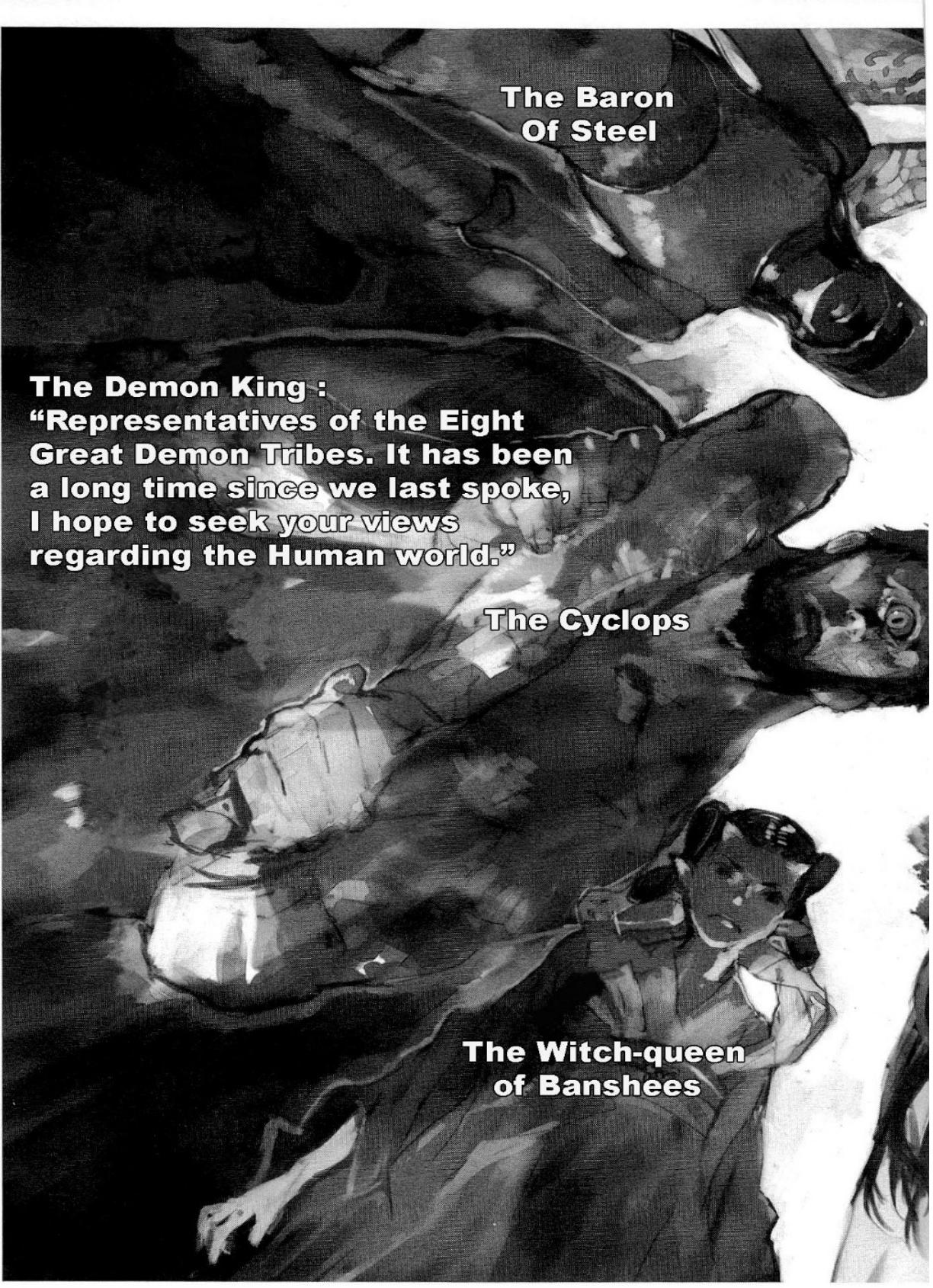
**The Queen
of the Fairies**

**The Chieftain
of the Tattooed**

**The King
of the Pale**

**The Silver
Tiger Lord**

**The Fire
Dragon Lord**



**The Baron
Of Steel**

The Demon King :
"Representatives of the Eight Great Demon Tribes. It has been a long time since we last spoke, I hope to seek your views regarding the Human world."

The Cyclops

**The Witch-queen
of Banshees**

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS



Nobleman's Son:
A human. A student taken
in by the Demon King.
As an envoy of the Kingdom
of Ice, he goes throughout
the Central Continent
lobbying for the
Southern United Kingdoms.

The Female Paladin:
An original companion of the Hero.
The swordsmanship teacher of the
trio of Sons. She lives a very
Spartan lifestyle. She usually
works for the Holy Order.

Merchant's Son:
A Human.
A student taken
in by the
Demon King.
For various
reasons (or
rather no reason)
he's somehow
become
the
Finance
Minister
of the
Kingdom of
Winter.

Soldier's Son:
A Human.
A student taken in by the
Demon King and trained
by the Female Paladin.
He later became a
Captain of the Watch
under the Kingdom
of Metal. He also stopped
talking in an excessively
polite manner.



The Mage: An original companion of the Hero. She's also known as The Living Nightmare. She always feels sleepy. Her magical abilities are on a legendary level.

The Chief Maid: Always by the side of the Demon King, she is her steward, her fashion stylist and her agitator at the same time. She believes that the 'Path of the Maid' is the most important thing in the world.



Little Sister Maid: A small chef. More than anything, she is willing to devote time and energy to researching new methods of food preparation. Her skill is increasing exponentially. In a word, she's simply a glutton.

Elder Sister Maid: A Human. Originally a serf. She now works at the residence of the Crimson Scholar. She works hard to free all the serfs. Even though she eats everything her sister makes, she still maintains a slender figure.

The Song of the Nameless Bard

The Song of the Nameless Bard

If only all was that should be.

The teachings of the one and only Church would be correct.

One gold coin would be worth one gold coin.

Against the evil Demons, the power of humans would unite.

And against smallpox, all one can do is pray.

The Demon King and the Hero joined hands and walked down the road of thorns.

From the light of the lantern, they could see the bodies of many people.

The sparks of the fires of war had been ignited.

The Church and the Southern United Kingdoms had a **Schism**,

The Central Continent had **Declared War**.

The Church split into two Churches,

The price of wheat shot up, and gold coins became useless,

Searching for freedom, the serfs migrated to the South,

The hungry masses ate the **Heretical** potato.

As Human clashed with Human, **Human and Demon** joined forces.

The Southern United Kingdoms acquired **Smallpox Medicine** from the Demons,

And the Holy Empire, the bulwark against Demonic invasion, signed a **Secret Agreement** with the Demons of the Pale,

The Song of the Nameless Bard

The Fire Dragon Lady, seeking **Salt**, appeared in front of the Young Merchant.

While the Demon King and the Hero went missing, the ones who stayed to protect the Human World were the Kings and the three Disciples, the disciples of the Demon King.

At the same time, the strong currents of fate were brewing,

Standing in front of the entire Demon Race, the Demon King proclaimed the **Kurultai**.

Opposing conciliation with the Humans, despite overwhelming consensus,

The Demon King of the Pale played an unexpected card,

And called for the **Impeachment** of the Demon King

Volume 2 Chapter 1, “There will be Two Churches. And so it begins!”

---- The Palace of Winter, a Large Room, Strategy Committee

The Hero: “Ah— Dammit!” *Slams table.*

Elder Maid Sister: “I- I’m sorry...”

The Hero: “I— I said this many times before. We have to find a peaceful solution, a peaceful solution, but at this rate, we might as well be like those potatoes subjected to a Class A Hellfire Destruction Spell, right!?”

Little Maid Sister: “I’m hungry.”

Seneschal: “Shall I bring something?”

Disciple Merchant: “Sure, how about some Porridge.”

Little Maid Sister: “Porridge!? That’s not tasty!”

Seneschal: “In that case, I shall bring some cream pastry.”

Lone Winter King: “I apologise.”

The Female Paladin: “That’s alright, Hero. I was there too.”

Queen of Ice and Snow: “Hero, Hero, please do try to calm down.”

Iron Fist King: “Gahaha! We can’t help what’s already happened!”

The Hero: “What the hell is wrong with you guys! Aren’t you even the least bit concerned about what could happen to your Kingdoms, huh! Is that what you royalty do!”

Iron Fist King: “The situation is as it is. Please just listen, we must calm down.”

Queen of Ice and Snow: “It was a brilliant performance, surely our subjects will understand as well.”

The Hero: "If we don't do something, I'm going to get very angry!"

Iron Fist King: "That being said, the seriousness of the situation is that we're being accused of heresy."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Yep."

The Hero: "?"

Iron Fist King: "It would be nice if they would stop saying that about us."

Lone Winter King: "Yes."

The Hero: "...?"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Oh, I'm sorry, I should explain. The Hero..... has just returned to the Human World after all. In other words, unfortunately, the Central Continent is still falsely accusing us of heresy. Of course, they will probably falsely accuse us to the end. The ultimate aim of the Central Continent is most likely to force our dependence on them and weaken our Kingdoms..."

Lone Winter King: "In other words, the real question is, 'How much do we value our independence from the Central Continent?'"

The Hero: "I understand that much."

Lone Winter King: "However, the performance by the Elder Sister Maid has altered the direction of the wind. To the Central Continent, everything may have been normal until now, but to us... In other words, to the Southern United Kingdoms, we have always faced the problem of how to orientate our country in order to achieve independence for our people."

The Hero: "..."

Elder Maid Sister: "I- I- I'm sorry..."

Lone Winter King: "The impact of that performance was not small. And, like a Fire on the Plains, its force is only set to increase."

Seneschal: "Right now, what we're facing is a spate of insurrections by nearby serfs against slave-owning landlords."

The Female Paladin: "Mmm."



Explanation

Porridge: A type of gruel made from ground oats. As it has no taste on its own, in order to make it palatable, various additional ingredients are often added. Porridge without any complementary ingredients (or with the mere addition of salt) is considered to be a dish particularly disliked by children in Europe and North America and is, in fact, one of the Worst Three Dishes.

Fire on the Plains: If a fire is started in a wide plain, due to the lack of obstacles and abundant amount of fuel, it could potentially burn forever.

Seneschal: "The branches of the Holy Church of Light in the Southern United Kingdoms have been instigating insurrections against the King and against the Military. The rulers of the Kingdoms are now being seen as heretical traitors, so it was to be expected."

The Hero: "Is that so?"

Seneschal: "Yes. Well, this is from the Church of Light, but the Potatoes which have made our lives so prosperous up to now are to be confiscated. The Settlers and the Landlords are now embroiled in such chaos. No matter how you think about it, they are surely torn by what the Church of Light is doing....."

Lone Winter King: "To remove potatoes from our growing population is next to impossible.

Chapter 1

Right now, we face the conflicting options of either allowing our people to starve in subordination to the Central Continent, or turning our backs to the Continent."

Iron Fist King: "Those are our choices."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Yeah."

Lone Winter King: "At the very least, we should try working with our people."

Iron Fist King: "What are you saying? We should just impale a few of those serfs!"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "My, my. Such things don't happen in my country.
Ohohohohoho."

The Hero: "What are you saying!? Are you drunk!"

Lone Winter King: "No, no, it does happen in your country!"

Iron Fist King: "Hohohohohoho!"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Well, well, it appears the Southern United Kingdoms will be in trouble in any case."

Little Maid Sister: "This bread is delicious!"

Seneschal: "Isn't it?" *Smiles*

Disciple Merchant: "It's nice that it's hot."

Little Maid Sister: "How do they make it so sweet?"

Seneschal: "I think they put raisins in it."

The Hero: "Enough of that! Try to understand what's going on!"

Lone Winter King: "Mmhmm."

The Hero: "Let's think about the strategy, the direction and the impending war!
Properly!"

Seneschal: "Well, I definitely think we should live together with the citizens. The reason why we would raise our flag in defiance to the Central Continent is to protect these very citizens, for these citizens, we may very well be destroyed in this war. If our people die in the fires of this war, we will have lost everything."

The Female Paladin: "Hero."

The Hero: "Okay, first, Female Paladin."

The Female Paladin: "I'm bad at thinking about things." *Ahem.*

Iron Fist King: "Ahahahaha! The fool appears!"

The Female Paladin: "I will protect the purity of the Hero!"

The Hero: "Who let these guys drink so much, damnit. They reek of wine... One, two, three. Four? Five cups?!"

The Female Paladin: "The Battle Techniques of the Holy Order of the Lake, the Sword of Love, and the Indulgence of Slaughter are without parallel!"

The Hero: "It may be without parallel, but it's completely useless here, isn't it?!"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Then I'll speak next."

The Hero: "Alright, second will be the Queen of Ice and Snow. The well-endowed middle-aged woman."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "I'm a married woman, so I should probably bury people who make such comments, shouldn't I? Anyway, when it comes to dealing with this issue, I think all we can do is the Emancipation of the Serfs..."

The Hero: "A surprisingly valid point."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Because of the potatoes, the Dependent Population has greatly increased, so I think we should start considering more radical solutions."

Iron Fist King: "But, shouldn't we do this when we aren't at war with the Central Continent?"



Emancipation of the Serfs: This refers to allowing serfs the freedom to move or to change occupations. Of course, they can continue to remain farmers as well, but at the very least, they will no longer have to mindlessly follow the orders of the Landlords. Truly a joyous thing.

The Hero: “What will we do about that?”

Queen of Ice and Snow: “War is something you people are interested in, so I’ll leave that to you.” *Gulp, gulp, gulp.* “Another glass please.”

Seneschal: “Yes, coming right up.”

The Hero: “Oh no. This grandma didn’t think of anything either...”

Iron Fist King: “Hehe, then I guess it’s time for me to take the stage. Hero. I am the Sixth King of the Kingdom of Metal, the Iron Fist King!”

Slams table!

The Hero: “There’s no need to be so excited, but alright, third, the Iron Fist King.”

Iron Fist King: “First, we should establish the frontlines of the Armies of our Triple Entente at the Northern Plains. In order to ensure that the harvests of our gentry do not diminish, this time we need to be on the offensive. We’ll add the excess food stocks to the salaries of the mercenaries. Wait, we still have some of that monetary aid from the Central Continent. We’ve got some saved up from the previous Kings as well.”

The Hero: "Ohhh! You finally said something solid!"

Iron Fist King: "And we can sally forth and meet those Inquisitors and the Armies of the Central Continent on those Northern Plains. If we use the previous Crusades as a reference, they should have at least 50,000 strong. We will break them there!"

The Hero: "Hmm."

Iron Fist King: "And then we will continue to move North and take out their garrisons! Invade their cities! We will force every Kingdom we come across to pledge allegiance to the South, we will win a stunning chain of victories! We are an invincible Army of Steel!"

The Hero: "Umm— "

Iron Fist King: "And then we will continue to the Holy City, we will attack it in waves, day and night until the City falls! We will never look back. They will tell tales of our conquest for centuries to come! Gahahahahaha!"

The Hero: "Alright, that's enough!"

Seneschal: "If we follow that plan, we'll be decimated."

The Hero: "...What shall we do..."

Elder Maid Sister: "I'm sorry, Hero."

Lone Winter King: "Hmm, we need to look at this fundamentally."

The Hero: "Have you thought of something, Your Majesty?"

Lone Winter King: "Honestly, no."

The Hero: "—"

Lone Winter King: "But if we focus... I'm sure we can think of something."

The Hero: "Ah— That's enough. Oi, anyone? Has anyone thought of anything?"

Seneschal: "Umm—"

The Hero: "Ahh, and who are you?"

Seneschal: "I am just a nameless soldier, Hero, sir!" *Salutes.*

The Hero: "No, you're the only sober one, so you're the only useful one here."

Seneschal: "I have also not thought of anything, but something has come to my attention. No, it would be better to say that I've noticed something."

The Hero: "Yeah?"

Seneschal: "First, I'm afraid I believe the Central Continent has yet to send its troops out as of the present."

Disciple Merchant: "That's probably true."

The Hero: "What evidence do you have?"



Dependent Population: The percentage of the population which does not contribute to the economy by working, but nonetheless continues to consume food and requires supplies. Each working person usually has to support a few dependents such as children and elderly parents.

Disciple Merchant: "Firstly, the primary goal of the Central Continent is to subjugate the Southern United Kingdoms, not to obliterate it."

If the Southern United Kingdoms were obliterated and the Demons decided to invade, all that would happen is that they would lose the shield by which they protect themselves. As such, shouldn't we try to put pressure on them for some form of peaceful negotiations?"

Seneschal: "Moreover, the majority of the military power of the Central Continent is decentralised among the nobility. As a result, they would need a significant amount of time in order to mobilise and equip their armies, and if they did manage to move their armies out, there would be a problem with reward. In this situation... I wouldn't like to consider it, but the outcome would likely be the fragmentation of the Southern United Kingdoms and the rewarding of parts of the Kingdom to the nobility. In order to achieve this, they must ready an army capable of crushing any opposition in the Southern United Kingdoms. That will require time."

The Hero: "Hmm, and what are your intentions?"

Lone Winter King: "It's almost wintertime. And we have a short while before spring. If everything is normal, that would give us at least six months."

The Hero: "Six months..."

Lone Winter King: "But... No... Something like that..."

Seneschal: "...?"

The Hero: "What are you thinking of, Your Majesty?"

Lone Winter King: "No. Well... I was just worried about something. It's impossible. I think it's impossible, but..."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Young King, stop beating around the bush."

Iron Fist King: "Gahahahaha! There's no need to be modest!"

Lone Winter King: "The Holy Empire... At the very least, they must control some segment of the Demons, right?"



Pause.

Lone Winter King: "No, it's just a thought. Hahaha. Well, if that's the case, that would explain why they can rest easy about another invasion from the Demon Race."

That's why they can afford to relax the pressure they've put on the Southern United Kingdoms. For example, if they could time it to coincide with the Demon

Invasion to accuse us of heresy again, they could take advantage of our military and economic exhaustion... No, it's just an empty thought."

The Hero: "Well, with regards to that, all I can do is go out and investigate it..."

The Female Paladin: "What!? You're going? You're always going off, Hero! You're going to the ends of the world again— No— to the top of the world!"

The Hero: "Get a grip on yourself." *Shakes.*

The Female Paladin: "Ugh." *Headdesk.*

The Hero: (Uhh, I guess we'd better start on something... Someone, something... What would she do? How would she think? We can't just look at things on the surface. We've got to consider structural deficiencies and profit-loss mechanisms... What?!)

Little Maid Sister: "Tada! This is pie!"

Seneschal: "Wow! This looks very refined..."

The Hero: (Why are we even fighting to begin with? Is this about... the land? Or for prosperity? I suppose it's for prosperity...?)

...In other words, stockpiling money might create 'Wealth', but it doesn't contribute to 'Prosperity'. Goods and capital flows must be established without stagnation in order to achieve 'Prosperity'.

The Hero: (In other words, umm, this is a related topic. The flow that comes from buying goods and selling goods... That is prosperity, is it not? In that case, our World isn't prosperous, is it? It's too closed up... The Church is doing it, the Holy Empire is doing it. Why? Setting limits on the world, making it smaller... What is the point?"

Iron Fist King: "It's golden and pretty!"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "What's this inside? Quail meat and eggs?"

The Hero: (In other words, what the Church wants is... to become Rich? They want to monopolise the wealth. No, not just the wealth. Knowledge, popularity, power... they want to monopolise everything?)

Disciple Merchant: "How interesting, it has a very refined texture."

Little Maid Sister: "That's right! It's because of the pears, I think. ♪"

The Hero: (If the environment remains closed, a hierarchy under which other people's gains get sucked up is created. This is a never-ending cycle, isn't it? Is it... what the Demon King would call something that needs to be changed?)

Elder Sister Maid: "Hero...?"

— *The Spirit... By way of a miracle, the Spirit bestowed life onto humanity; by way of the Blessings of the Earth, the Spirit bestowed wealth; by way of our fractured souls, the Spirit bestowed freedom to us all.*

The Hero: (Monopoly... Life... Wealth... and Freedom... To monopolise is the attempt to solely own something. This is not Being Prosperous, this is merely Making Others Poor.)

Lone Winter King: "Hoho, there's something sweet here too. Hmm, delicious!"

Seneschal: "This is surely a luxury food."

Iron Fist King: "It'll probably go great with alcohol. It could be a little saltier."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "It's light, and quite similar to Palace food."

The Hero: (Making one person... the focal point. The gathering point. Allowing him and him alone to reach the top.)

Disciple Merchant: "This can surely become a new product!"

Little Maid Sister: "Ehehe, really?"

Lone Winter King: "Yeah, I'll even write you a Royal Rescript personally!"

Seneschal: "We will designate you as the Royal Purveyor."

Iron Fist King: "Ohh, me too."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Send some to the Kingdom of Ice as well."

The Hero: "Focus here! You damn royalty!"

Elder Maid sister: "I- I- I'm sorry, hero."

Iron Fist King: "Gahahaha! There's no point laughing while crying, Hero. Which one will you have?"

The Hero: "Which one?"

Little Maid Sister: "The quail pie or the pear pie? ♪"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "There are two types. They're both delicious though."

Little Maid Sister: "Yep. ♪ So which one?"

The Hero: "—"

Seneschal: "Hero?"

Lone Winter King: "Heh."

The Hero: "— "

Elder Sister Maid: "...Hero?"

The Hero: "Make a Royal Proclamation."

Disciple Merchant: "Proclamation? For a new tax? Or a new law?"

The Hero: "The Kingdoms of the Triple Entente of the Southern United Kingdoms will formally recognise the Holy Order of the Lake as the national religion of the state and the True Faith of the Spirit of Light."

Seneschal: "Eh?"

The Hero: "That's right! Who decided that there could only be one Church! It's fine even if we have two! It's good to be able to choose! Let's do it! We'll do it then. Hey, wake up, Female Paladin." *Shakes the Female Paladin.*

The Female Paladin: "Ugh, ughhh—"

The Hero: "Then let's put the Royal Seal on it and make it into law! Here! The Speech by the Elder Sister Maid? Let's put that into writing as a teaching of the Holy Order of the Lake. We'll make Agricultural Technology one of the precepts too! Isn't that great? We can replace books on theology with books about that. If you like, we can even issue coupons for the people to exchange for Tubers."

Lone Winter King: "And what would be the point of that?"

The Hero: "There will be two ways to the top. There will be Two Churches. And so it begins!"



Royal Rescript: These are official orders issued by the Emperor or by Kings of countries, particularly in Japan. For it to be a rescript, the orders have to be in response to a request by the people or by the government.

Royal Purveyor: These refer to the merchants, craftsmen and businesses that are officially given the license to supply the Royal Family or the Church with certain goods or services. By

becoming a Royal Purveyor, the business then usually becomes very popular. This is because being a Royal Purveyor is testament to the quality and class of the product. For this reason, it is a status that every business would like to acquire. In pre-war Japan, Purveyor to the Imperial House was a fairly common title among businesses.

Proclamation: This refers to an official statement or declaration in order to spread knowledge about a certain law or decree that has been put into place. In most cases, a herald goes to cities and villages to make the announcement. However, the Hero intends to distribute leaflets and rely on the people to pass the message based on their own sense of justice.

Tubers: Tubers are a family of plants to which the potato belongs to. They have no seeds and are grown from the tuber themselves. A single tuber can be cut up as long as it still contains the shoot, and in this way, many plants can be grown from one tuber.

---- The City of the Gulf, Merchant's Quarter, a Large Office in the Chambers of Commerce

Young Merchant: "Huh?"

Shrewd Accountant: "Umm, like I said... There's been a new Church."

Young Merchant: "The Holy Order of the Lake?"

Shrewd Accountant: "Yeah, at least that's what the Triple Entente declared."

Young Merchant: "..."

Shrewd Accountant: "What is happening?"

Young Merchant: "Hehehehehe."

Shrewd Accountant: "?"

Young Merchant: "Hahahahahaha! Is that so! Is that how it is now! Who is responsible for this? That person? No, it feels different. That person wouldn't do something so brazen as this. She would at least inform me first. Something so schismatic, only the Hero would do it. Ahahaha!"

Shrewd Accountant: "Councillor....."

Young Merchant: “Is that right, there’s another Church? Ahaha. That’s excellent! They’ve really done it!!! I’m sure the leaders of the Holy Church must be seeing red or blue. In fact, they’re probably black with rage, aren’t they?”

Shrewd Accountant: “That’s to be expected. It’s a frightful situation.”

Young Merchant: “Ahahaha. Excellent! What a rare event. This is worth at least a hundred gold pieces! How wonderful it is to see those old men swimming in the cold water now.”

Shrewd Accountant: “That’s true. Well! They’ve gone ahead and raised someone accused of heresy to sainthood, don’t you think they’re being too confrontational about it?”

Young Merchant: “What’s the situation?”

Shrewd Accountant: “They have support from the people who have been oppressed by the Holy Church of Light in the Central Continent. That was to be expected though. However, there’s something that worries me...”

Young Merchant: “Something that worries you?”

Shrewd Accountant: “This thing is being distributed.” *Takes out leaflet.*

Young Merchant: “Paper? That’s got to be expensive.”

Shrewd Accountant: “No, well, it seems that the Kingdom of Ice is coming up with new factories...”

Young Merchant: “Factories?”

Shrewd Accountant: “They’re like large workshops. They can produce paper in huge quantities. Moreover, using printing from the Kingdom of Metal, they can even print words onto the paper fairly cheaply.”

Young Merchant: “Hmm, I see. That’s... like using a seal.”

Shrewd Accountant: “Yes, you’ll understand when you read it, but it’s like this...”

Young Merchant: “...” *Flinches.*

Shrewd Accountant: “Yeah, that’s right. They intend to liberate all the serfs. That would explain why the surrounding Kingdoms have seen an incredible number of serfs migrating to the Tripartite Union.”

Young Merchant: “Hoho.”

Shrewd Accountant: “You’re not surprised?”

Young Merchant: “If it’s them, this sort of thing is fairly standard.”

Shrewd Accountant: “Is that so?”

Young Merchant: “And what of the internal situation at the Union?”

Shrewd Accountant: “There are three Councillors in the Holy Church Faction and two in the Tripartite Faction. The rest are all Centrists. The Disciple Nobleman is... He’s really something. Just with a speech, he managed to convert one member of the Holy Church Faction and bring two members to the Centrists. Amazing.”

Young Merchant: “Hehe... How interesting, there’s a price to pay for this struggle for supremacy.”

Shrewd Accountant: “I’ll summarise the economic situation, then.” *Flips page.*

Young Merchant: “I don’t need to know the whole thing... But it’s good to know some things. How is the price of wheat?”

Shrewd Accountant: “It’s gone up by two points since last week. The price seems to be increasing steadily. It’s winter, and the Crop Failure in the Central Continent seems to be continuing. Looks like there’ll be a famine this year as well.”

Young Merchant: “Buy.”

Shrewd Accountant: “Buy? But if we release the Union’s stock of wheat, won’t we get a fairly large Profit Margin?”

Young Merchant: "...Well, there are many who view that we should buy while the price is still rising. Let's just go with that for now."

Shrewd Accountant: "Y- yes."

Young Merchant: "For now, buy enough wheat to raise the price by six points. Send that around to all the merchants of the Union."

Shrewd Accountant: "Understood." *Scribbles.*

Young Merchant: "In that case, here's a memo for the Union's branch managers. Iron, charcoal, silver. Buy everything."

Shrewd Accountant: "How many points?"

Young Merchant: "It would be unnatural to micromanage to such an extent, let them handle it."

Shrewd Accountant: "Yes." *Scribbles.*

Young Merchant: "Next week let's go up to 100 points. Next month, buy up to 250 points of wheat."

Shrewd Accountant: "?!"

Young Merchant: "What's wrong?"

Shrewd Accountant: "That'll raise the price by three times?! That's completely abnormal! I've never heard of anyone buying wheat like that. Where in the world will we get the funds to do that?!"

Young Merchant: "If you check, I'm sure you would find we definitely have enough funds for it."

Shrewd Accountant: "Even so, this is highly irregular."

Young Merchant: "Is it?"

Shrewd Accountant: "Just what do you intend? If you do this, we'll lose a significant amount of our reserves. What is the point of filling our warehouses with so much wheat!"

Young Merchant: "Ahahahaha. It just looks that way. We're not just buying it, don't you see?"

Shrewd Accountant: "What do you mean?"

Young Merchant: "We're selling the gold from the Kingdoms." *Smiles.*

----- The Palace of Winter, a Large Room, Strategy Committee

Seneschal: "Just from what I saw along the border roads, there were 12 people yesterday."

The Hero: "Hmm, the pace is dulling faster than we expected."

Lone Winter King: "Mmm."

Elder sister Maid: "As I thought, freedom isn't such a big thing after all..."

The Hero: "Well, it's difficult to say."

Lone Winter King: "We have to teach words to those who have no words to say."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Indeed..."

The Female Paladin: "Bah. Why don't we just kidnap a few?"

The Hero: "Are you really a Paladin?"

Lone Winter King: "Well, even if the pace is this slow, winter will still end."



Points: In Economic terminology, this is the percentage rise or fall from a set index of prices at a given time for a given good.

Crop Failure: A case of bad harvest arising from bad weather, poor soil conditions or other circumstances which may cause crops to fail.

Buy: In a stock or commodities market, traders usually set a base and a ceiling price for their goods or stocks. When the price of the good rises

beyond a certain level, the traders will automatically buy as a failsafe so they will not miss out on the opportunity. But when the price of the good falls below a certain level, the traders will automatically sell everything so that they do not lose all of their money. Nowadays, this all takes place electronically and automatedly so that the trader will not go bankrupt if his position collapses overnight.

Profit Margin: The difference between the cost of purchasing the good and the selling price of the good. The key to being a merchant is to buy cheap and sell high, and hopefully buy again when it is cheap again.

Selling Gold from the Kingdom: Even when I read this on the forums (*TL Note: and when I translated it*), I had no clue what it was saying. It's fine even if you don't understand right now (though at this moment the Young Merchant is probably the only one who understands). When you start to understand what this means later on, you'll probably applaud him.

The Hero: "That's right. At the very least, we've won over quite a number during this winter and we've also strengthened the existing routes. Over time, our Church will grow in membership and in clergy. But at this rate, we'll be squeezed out. Yeah... It's an incredibly massive hurdle."

The Female Paladin: "We'll send out missionaries, but the Holy Order of the Lake doesn't even have fifty. We can't hope to match the Central Continent."

The Hero: "Hmm..."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Missionaries? — Can we do it without missionaries?"

The Female Paladin: "Do you have an idea?"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "How about poets? My country is renown for its Bards. Luckily for us, since it's almost winter, all the bards roaming the land are gathering in my Royal Capital. If we contracted these people, they could spread throughout the land singing. They could sing about the Teachings of the New Church and about coming to the Three Kingdoms."

Songs are powerful, right? Farmers don't know how to interpret or remember difficult words and sermons either. If we want them to remember and spread it, the effect of a song from a Bard will probably be far more widespread."

The Female Paladin: "That's a good idea!"

The Hero: "How many are there?"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "I don't know exactly, but I would be willing to say close to 500."

Lone Winter King: "Alright, I'll be counting on you then. I'm sure we wouldn't mind paying for this as well."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Okay... Hmm, we should write up Letters of Recommendation for the Bards and send them to the colonies? For each colony they go to, we could give one silver piece per bard?"

The Hero: "That's good! Umm... How would the Scholar say it, an incentive?"

Lone Winter King: "Incentive?"

The Hero: "We'll pay those who demonstrate that they can do work."

Elder Maid Sister: "Umm..."

Lone Winter King: "Yeah, what's up?"

Elder Maid Sister: "Aren't we supposed to be discussing a war?"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Well, in a situation where the Demons could invade at any time, I think fighting among ourselves would be very stupid."

Elder Maid Sister: "Then I think we should not fight with the Church either."

The Hero: "...Hmm."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "What do you mean?"

Elder Maid Sister: "I think the people from the Church would probably abuse the Missionaries and Bards. They would call them liars, tools of the Demons... Heretics."

The Hero: "They probably would."

The Female Paladin: "How stupid of them."

Elder Maid Sister: "At this rate, our conflict with them could become a war. And humans should not be fighting with each other."

Lone Winter King: "That's true."

Elder Maid Sister: "That's why I think the content of the message that the Missionaries and the Bards and the leaflets we're going to give out should not be overflowing with criticism against the Church."

The Female Paladin: "But it's clear that we do oppose those people. No matter how we phrase it, we're still at odds with them."

Elder Maid Sister: "That may be true, but the large majority of believers are just simple people who believe in the Holy Spirit of Light, right? To these people, the differences between the Churches barely make sense."

The Hero: "That's..."

The Female Paladin: "So are you saying we should just ignore it? Just keep quiet?"

Elder Maid Sister: "I don't think that would be an appropriate response either. I think we should praise instead of criticise. The Holy Spirit of Light is a noble existence. Justice, determination and peace. These are points which we can agree on. Which means, these are points that the Church of the Central Continent cannot refute, and hence the people who respect the faith will respect us as well."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "But that won't win us followers from the Settlers, will it?"

Elder Maid Sister: "That would depend on the methods that we use. Much of the wastelands to the South have not been developed. It will be hard work, but there are opportunities. The opportunities to cultivate the land are a gift from the Spirit. The Southern United Kingdoms can open up these areas to settlers, where serfdom does not exist, where anyone who works there is entitled to the fruits of his labours without fear of famine. Taxes will be low as well. If we do that, surely there will be lots of people willing to move here?"

Lone Winter King: "So we'll entice them with food and land... Theoretically that should work, and we could even turn that dreaded emptiness into a weapon."

The Hero: "Is everyone whom she teaches this capable?"

Elder Maid Sister: "When I have to take care of my glutton sister... I try my best to come up with something."

---- **The City of the Gulf, Merchant's Quarter, a Large Office in the Chambers of Commerce**

Shrewd Accountant: "Councillor, the price of wheat in most cities has gone up by six points."

Young Merchant: "What's the effect on the market?"

Shrewd Accountant: "The noblemen and the merchants are extremely pleased. We are seeing a significant number of those with wheat in their hands attempting to exchange it for gold. The farmers are still being quite guarded. After all, this isn't just a commodity to them, it's food. However, there are also significant exchanges taking place in that sector."

Young Merchant: "Is that so?"

Shrewd Accountant: "The current price isn't very different from an average year's. I believe that is why we aren't seeing a stronger reaction just yet."

Young Merchant: "Understood. — What we're going to do next is issue Agricultural Futures."

Shrewd Accountant: "I'm not familiar with the term. What do you mean?"

Young Merchant: "That's because I've just invented them. Here, listen up."

Shrewd Accountant: "Why don't you use the blackboard?"

Takes out chalk.

Young Merchant: "It's winter now. Winter Wheat is sown in autumn, grows through the winter and is harvested in the spring. Currently, the wheat has been sown, but they haven't been harvested... And they'll only be harvested in six months. In that time, many things could occur to jeopardise the harvest that would take place six months later."

Shrewd Accountant: "Mmhmm, this is common knowledge."

Young Merchant: "But if something were to happen during this period, the wheat yields may fall dramatically and the incomes of the Landlords and Farmers will fall. Otherwise, there could be brilliant weather, and every farmer could experience a bumper crop of wheat that may cause the Market Price of wheat to fall significantly."

Shrewd Accountant: "Mmm." *Scribbles.*

Young Merchant: “This is where we issue a Wheat Future. In other words, an agreement to purchase the wheat after it is ready.”

Shrewd Accountant: “Do you mean we will pay in advance?”

Young Merchant: “That’s right.”

Shrewd Accountant: “So the Landlords and Farmers sell wheat which they don’t have yet.”

Young Merchant: “That’s right. However, when it comes time to delivery... At the beginning of the year, in early spring, we can be assured that they will be able to sell that certain quantity of wheat.”

Shrewd Accountant: “In other words, if the crop is good, the Landlords would already have sold the wheat and they wouldn’t have to incur additional costs in trying to find a buyer.”

Young Merchant: “If during or before the transfer, some kind of crisis occurs such that the Market Price increases, we would also be able to get wheat below the Market Price.”

Shrewd Accountant: “Can you predict the Market Price?”

Young Merchant: “The Central Continent, Holy Empire and Church have issued the excommunication for heresy, and hence the likelihood of there being a war is high. Even if we do manage to avoid a war, that will also be to our benefit.”

Shrewd Accountant: “Why?”

Young Merchant: “If we manage to avoid a war, then the population will not decrease. What we lack right now are funds and shipping ability. Those can be considered the ‘pulses’ of the Market. Since there is more demand for the food, the stock of wheat will artificially be depleted, and hence there’s no way that the price of wheat can go down.”

Shrewd Accountant: “...”

Young Merchant: "Conversely, if the yields of wheat in the continent exceed our expectations, the Union might go bankrupt."

Shrewd Accountant: "...I see. It's a way of artificially manipulating the Market Prices. As far as this Wheat Futures thing is concerned, we're still tied to the noblemen, right?"

Young Merchant: "That's one way of putting it. There are possible options."

Shrewd Accountant: "I don't understand your aim..."

Young Merchant: "This relies on the judgment of the Landlords and Farmers. They will be thinking about the Market Price of Wheat for the next year. As long as we have the Wheat Future, so to speak, we've basically borrowed a large amount of wheat and are waiting for it. We don't have to worry about harming the fields we control. When it comes to the springtime harvest, they have to remember to separate the Wheat which they need to transfer to us."

Shrewd Accountant: "Is that so..."

Young Merchant: "Our present goal is to suppress the price fluctuation of Wheat. This is the first step. Even in early spring, the amount of wheat which they can freely control would be very little. They would barely have any left on their hands. However, if the price of wheat were to suddenly rise... Actually, it doesn't even need to rise very high. Everyone thinks, 'It would be terrible if such a thing happened.' This uncertainty would be to our advantage. Using the Future, they would hand over the Kingdom's gold. It's a cheap investment." *Smiles.*

Shrewd Accountant: "—"

Young Merchant: "The Central Continent nobility are beginning to taste what a slightly long winter is like. It's the start of a fun dance. This Waltz — buy, sell, exchange. The effect of this drives the entire Continent."



Market Price: The market price of a good is determined by the supply and demand of the given good. In this case, the good is Wheat.

An Agreement to Purchase the Wheat After it is Ready: One type of Future. A future is an agreement to purchase a given amount of goods at a given time in the future at a given price. A future helps to stabilise the price of a good whether its Market Price increases or decreases,

so that the seller can be assured of a minimum sale price. This was likely first begun in 16th Century Belgium. Back then, the Wheat Future was not a sale for money, but a barter trade for a physical good.

Waltz: A type of music performed in triple time, typically for dancing to.

----- The City of the Gate, Independence Committee, Office

Knock knock.

East Fortress Base Commander: “It’s open— Come in— ”

Fire Dragon Lady: “How are you, Commander?”

East Fortress Base Commander: “Not good, not bad. The weather is brilliant but I’ve got a mountain load of work. No matter how much I do, it never ends.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “If it never ends no matter how much you do, how about you just don’t do any of it?”

East Fortress Base Commander: “My, my! What a privileged lady!”

Fire Dragon Lady: “Not at all!” *Glares.*

Wealthy Demon Merchant: “Hahaha. You’re still the same.”

Fire Dragon Lady: "Oh! It's Uncle Cloud Dragon."

East Fortress Base Commander: "He came to visit us to conduct trade negotiations."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Am I intruding? Should I come back later so you can talk freely?"

Wealthy Demon Merchant: "No, no, it's a simple matter, though there are many parts. You really are a very brave person, you know."

East Fortress Base Commander: "No, no. The Free City isn't just a name, we've really got to do what we can. I am very honoured that a merchant like yourself would make the long trip here to see us."

Aide-de-Camp: "Yes, indeed. Ahh, Your Excellency, please have some Cocoa Tea."

Wealthy Demon Merchant: "Hahaha. With this, I don't have to scrutinise any fine print or offer any money from inside my sleeve. I don't have to do anything really."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Well, that is because the City of the Gate is governed by a Free Council. According to the laws for civil servants, those who are found accepting bribes will have their heads chopped off. — Uncle? What is your business in this City?"

Wealthy Demon Merchant: "Haha, just some daily necessities. Salt, metal, potatoes, maize. Cocoa Beans. Cotton. And maybe some ores as well."

Fire Dragon Lady: "When you say it like that, it appears your organisation is going to be a very massive business in the City."

East Fortress Base Commander: "The Wealthy Merchant would like to sell potatoes to the City, and purchase salt here..."

Aide-de-Camp: "Oh my."

Wealthy Demon Merchant: "In the past, we used to get our shipments of salt from the Isle of Light. Ah, it hurts to talk about it."

Fire Dragon Lady: "I see..."

Wealthy Demon Merchant: "Oh my, how could I say something so insensitive in front of the Human Base Commander? Please excuse my dementia."

Fire Dragon Lady: "..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "No, no, don't think anything of it. To plainly speak, we also took quite a beating from you Demons. Lots of my subordinates were disbanded, but I suppose when we live in this world, we get used to all this conflict... I'm just grateful to wake up alive every morning — that's how I think anyway."

Wealthy Demon Merchant: "So young yet so tenacious."

East Fortress Base Commander: "We'll try to do something about the salt."

Wealthy Demon Merchant: "Then I'll leave it to you. Thank you for all the generous tea."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Aide-de-Camp, please see this gentleman out."

Aide-de-Camp: "Yes!"

Door closes.

East Fortress Base Commander: "What a powerful presence."

Fire Dragon Lady: "That's because Uncle is quite an authority figure in the Demon World. He may look like that now, but he used to be very fearsome in the past."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Right then, I have something I need to discuss with you."

Fire Dragon Lady: "So do I."



Cocoa Tea: This tea is made from Cocoa beans which are ground and roasted in order to extract the fatty oils that give it the flavour before adding sugar to the mix.

Money from Under the Sleeve: This refers to bribery. In the Edo period in Japan, in order to give bribes to officials, a paper bag of money would be passed from hand to hand, while being hidden by the long sleeves of Japanese clothing at the time, hence gaining its proverbial reputation.

Cocoa Beans: From processing cocoa beans, one is able to obtain either cocoa to drink or chocolate. In real life, Cocoa was brought to Western Europe by Columbus from the New World, but in *Maoyuu*, it is a plant indigenous to the Demon World.

East Fortress Base Commander: “How about you go first.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “I’m worried about something... Have you heard of the Demon Race known as the Pale?”

East Fortress Base Commander: “The Pale? I think we’ve done battle with them, but I’m not too familiar. At that time, I couldn’t even really distinguish the Demon Races anyway.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “The Pale are a Demon Race consisting of the pale-skinned descendants of the Elder Gods. There are small-sized ones and large-sized members in their Race, which appears to consist of a federation of minor Races. Combined together, they excel at warfare.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “Hmm...”

Fire Dragon Lady: "The Dragon Race and the Fairy Race don't really interact too much with them. Well, actually, we don't really have much interest in interacting with other races. — The Pale were historically one of the Four Great Demon Races from which the Demon King would be chosen, or a Royal Race. There were some among that race who sought to conquer the Demon World."

East Fortress Base Commander: "This stinks of a conspiracy."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Recently, there have been Demons of the Pale sighted around the City..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "..."

Fire Dragon Lady: "I haven't confirmed this information myself yet, but that's the word on the street. The City of the Gate is a precious land where Humans and Demons may interact freely. Of course, we shouldn't bar Demons of the Pale from staying here, but— "

East Fortress Base Commander: "It's worrying."

Fire Dragon Lady: "..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "I understand, I shall investigate. Shall we entrust this to the Demon authorities? In any case, let's do something about it. Leave it to me."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Thank you... And what did you want to say?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Ahh, that's right."

Fire Dragon Lady: "?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "The Wealthy Merchant requested for salt."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Yes, and?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "There isn't any salt in the City."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Well..."

East Fortress Base Commander: “Isn’t this a problem?”

Fire Dragon Lady: “Such as it is, it’s an unreasonable request. The Demand for salt everywhere is very high, and the price is accordingly high as well. Even the Dragon Race has only one salt mine under our control.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “Well... There is one place we can go to.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “?”

East Fortress Base Commander: “The Human World.”

---- In a Courtyard, the Memories of the Demon King

The Demon King: “...Ahh! Ahh?!”

Tumbles.

The Demon King: “It’s already so late! ... Ughh. Wh-What? My back hurts. No, my whole body hurts... Why...”

The Chief Maid: “So late? It’s been two days.”

The Demon King: “Ohhh.”

The Chief Maid: “Please try to understand the limits of your body.”

The Demon King: “But it’s so interesting, I can’t stop.”

The Chief Maid: “I understand your emotions but— “

The Demon King: “Where are we?”

The Chief Maid: “I specialise in taking care of my principal. If you don’t exercise at all, and just sit here reading books and reports all day, your muscles are going to become stiff.”

The Demon King: “I suppose that’s true.”

The Chief Maid: "Shall I make you some tea?"

The Demon King: "It's fine, but why not."

The Chief Maid: "I am eternally grateful."

The Demon King: "You can stop saying that."

The Chief Maid: "But you saved the life of this slave."

The Demon King: "...Sorry."

The Chief Maid: "No, I didn't mean anything by that. There's something very important though."

The Demon King: "What? New research?"

The Chief Maid: "No, I've come up with a new way to make tea."

The Demon King: "What? That doesn't help anyone at all, I don't want it."

The Chief Maid: "A world comprised only of things which are important has no meaning. This is what it means for life to have colour. The Path of the Maid is one which places much emphasis on this colour."

The Demon King: "I would be grateful for tea in any case."

The Chief Maid: "Understood, Mistress."

The Demon King: "Mistress?"

The Chief Maid: "It's a title, please wait."

The Chief Maid runs off.

The Demon King: "But, my race is a race of pretty strange people... One could even call us the very definition of a strange people. They don't make them any stranger than us. We like to keep the room in order."

Clank... Clink clink clink.

The Demon King: “— Economic Fundamentals, Optimisation, Pareto Efficiency, Domestic Demand, Income, Production, Growth, the Hollowing-Out Phenomenon — things like these are inexhaustible. This is probably what one could term a set of values. From a theoretical point, these mark the beginning/creation of a new set of values. Through this set of actions caused by the creation and beginning of this set of values, the world has been broadened. Through the acquisition of this new viewpoint, we are reevaluating every world event. In other words, we are expanding the number of angles we look at the world from.

I believe that by holding many viewpoints, we can gain glimpses into many different worlds. This is the meaning of knowledge and learning. This is the raison d'etre for my Race. We believe in new concepts. We believe in expanding the world through new concepts. When concepts meet other concepts, they merge, giving birth to a flux which none of us are able to predict or imagine. What we are left with is a fruit. The fruit of the World.

Theoretically, we see that $T = n(n+1)/2$. How wonderful... How wonderful it is to know that. But, above this, the world is wonderful. This world is rapidly, rapidly expanding, not just for us Demons, but for...

The Demon King: "...for anyone with a soul. How splendid it is to call them that. In the distance, just how far does this expansive world stretch for? What sort of Combinatorial Explosions will take place? When two concepts like ours come into contact, what sort of fantastic world will we be able to witness?

The Human World... Perhaps to an ordinary Demon like myself, it is almost unimaginable. What sort of castles will it have? Will their villages be similar to ours? How strange will it be? If only I had more pictorial or video evidence...

We flow, goods flow and cash flows too. In fact, it is difficult to think of something which stays still. Even time flows. However, things which appear, rarely completely disappear. No matter how they are washed away, something still remains. Just like that Cosmic Library. I hear the songs of the records of billions and billions of worlds being sung. Why doesn't everyone else hear it too?

I really want to see it, that which is so proud, so high above, that which sings. No matter how I think about it, or how anyone else does... We'll never reach it."

The Chief Maid: "Mistress, the tea is here."

The Demon King: "Eh? What are you doing standing there?"

The Chief Maid: "...I said I would show you the new method."

The Demon King: "Hmm."

The Chief Maid: "Ahh!"

The Demon King: "Ahh?"

The Chief Maid: "Ahhm wait, wait, umm!"

The Demon King: "What are you saying?"

The Chief Maid: "Quickly, catch!"

The Demon King: "Eh?"

Throws.

The Demon King: "Hot! Hot! It's hot!"

The Chief Maid: "Are you all right!"

The Demon King: "What's with this cloth, ahh!"

The Chief Maid: "It's a new method."

The Demon King: "..."

The Chief Maid: "Knowledge sure is amazing. I will devote myself to further study."

The Demon King: "Just what sort of material have you been consulting!"



$T = n(n+1) / 2$: In order to sum up every integer from 1 to n, instead of using a calculator or other means, one simply has to follow the equation given. In this way, one can speedily solve large equations in an era without mechanical computing, hence opening up new dimensions of Mathematics.

Combinatorial Explosion: A computing terminology. As the amount of data increases, the number of ways to connect each of this data and the resulting possibilities of functions increases exponentially. Very soon, one will have more functions than a computer is capable of processing properly.

----- The Kingdom of the Mist, in an Unspecified Street in an Unspecified City

Bard: “~♪ We learnt, oh we learnt, from the Scholar as she came!

The first to learn were the Free among the people, the first of the four. Those who had lived a life among the grass. Next came those whose lives were one with the water, the people of the Lake. Third came the people of the sand and the barren waste, they who lived in hardship and with fortitude. The fourth were the men of the South, the settlers like wind who occupied the frontiers.

The wheat she brought wherever she went, like gold that came from her hands. They blew like wind across the land, and from the ground they so burst forth like fires red and warm and hot.

Where was spring? Where was spring? The time of harvest reared its head, as did the heads of the golden wheat. The potatoes that grew like hills below, sprung forth their fruits like mountains high. To the South, to the South. That is where the fruits they grow. To the South, to the South.

Come one come all, let's go. ~♪

---- The Palace of Winter, a Large Room, Strategy Committee

Door closes.

The Hero: "How goes our plan?"

Lone Winter King: "As expected, the literacy rate is one problem. Thanks to the widespread effect of the bards, we've seen an increase in the number of settlers as well."

Seneschal: "Even outside of the Southern Kingdoms, music is important during winter."

The Hero: "And what is this report?"

Flips.

The Hero: "..."

Lone Winter King: "Are you concerned about something?"

The Hero: "No, it's just that, we're not the only ones in this world."

Lone Winter King: "That's right."

Seneschal: "Huh?"

Lone Winter King: "It's either we share our profits, or separately, we are all compromised. That is something we should not forget."

Butler: "While we're on it, what about the others?"

Lone Winter King: "Ahh, the Iron Fist King and the Queen of Ice and Snow have returned from abroad. I suppose they can't be away forever."

Butler: "..." *Sighs.*

The Hero: "What's wrong?"

Butler: "This room completely and unpretentiously reeks of men."

The Hero: "The sisters have gone to be with the Queen of Ice and Snow. Even though the bards are already spreading the word, it's still better to be doing it directly. After that, it seems they'll be heading to the Kingdom of Metal to create an original copy of the printing press. They'll be going with the Female Paladin and some guards. In other words, this is now a men's paradise."

Seneschal: "The Female Paladin too?"

Butler: "Are we at such a precipice?"

The Hero: "That's right, do we need to go so far?"

Butler: "..." *Sighs.*

The Hero: "That being said, have they said anything?"

Lone Winter King: "Of course, look."

Places a crate of letters on table.

The Hero: "What!? That's a lot. Why is there so much!?"

Lone Winter King: "Well, when it comes to the Central Continent, we can't really say it's a unified country or anything. Up until 20 years ago, they were a group of small states that constantly fought among themselves, and up till the Demon invasion, the only thing that tied them together was the Church. That's why, even though they're just criticisms, there's naturally quite a lot here."

The Hero: "Then I suppose the content is all the same?"

Lone Winter King: "Yeah. At its core, it's basically just a series of official denunciations from the Holy Church of Light. Right now, it seems that they're threatening to Excommunicate us. The rest are declarations from Kings and Nobles. The content is mostly just asking us to apologise."

Chapter 1

Seneschal: "Well, well, most of it are just words for decoration, that's why each of them takes up about three pages."

The Hero: "What a bunch of fools."

Lone Winter King: "Well... There's no choice. I'm afraid from these official denunciations, it seems they are concerned that if they do not do anything about us, they'll anger one of the factions in the Central Continent. To put it another way, if the Tripartite Union continues to be denounced by all these Kingdoms and nobility, we could find ourselves isolated and bullied by everybody else."

The Hero: "Well, it's not like we didn't know that. Actually, if we actually do get excommunicated, it's likely that trade will grind to a halt, right."



Excommunication: This refers to being abandoned by the Church. In the Middle Ages, the Church was often the centre of much of life and society. In other words, those who were abandoned would find it difficult to live in human society, this applied for excommunicated countries as well. In the novel, excommunication is also an extremely severe punishment.

Seneschal: "That's right."

The Hero: "That's probably why no country has gone against the Church till now."

Lone Winter King: "That's right."

Lone Winter King: "In any case, I'm thinking of forming the Army into smaller divisions and sending them to patrol the borders."

The Hero: "That's a good idea."

Seneschal: "The provincial officials have reported unrest within the region."

Butler: "With regards to that, I've received reports as well. It seems that mercenaries have become bandit groups and are operating at the borders of the country. Furthermore, with the rapid emancipation of the serfs, there have been cases of reprisals and robberies against the landlords."

Lone Winter King: "This is a real problem, what a headache."

The Hero: "Yeah, I'm sorry. I'm not very good at this sort of thing. I don't have any good suggestions, and I don't know much about this."

Lone Winter King: "When it comes to this, I doubt there'll be some sort of sudden miracle. When a problem like this happens, we've got to deal with it as soon as we can. It's certainly amazing that we've managed to turn all the serfs into free settlers, whom each own their individual fields. However, in this case, no matter what, they have to cultivate fresh lands on their own. Those who cultivate new lands have the right to own them. However, when uncultivated lands turn out to be uncultivable, that's when these sorts of violent incidents begin."

The Hero: "I see."

Lone Winter King: "Moreover, since they don't have the sort of manpower or organisation that the landlords do, it's difficult to do labour-intensive work like cultivating new lands. Also, maintaining and supervising things which everyone else uses in the area, like public facilities, is next to impossible."

Actually, even if we manage to control the rate of this sort of violent revolution, compared to the land area, the number of citizens who live in the land are few, clearly an impoverished country. Liberating serfs is a good thing, but there's no point in ostracising the landlords in retribution."

The Hero: "Is there any way to solve this?"

Lone Winter King: "First, we'll have a patrolling guard. We should select soldiers who know the region well to patrol the villages within the area. That should take care of our basic defences. Next, we should severely punish those who break the law. We need to ensure the safe existence of the landlords, and restore law and order to the citizens."

Seneschal: "I will join in the patrols as well. We will make a tour of the villages in the country, and return in two weeks to reform and regroup."

The Hero: "Mmm."

Lone Winter King: "Next, we'll have to carry out a census and a collectivisation."

The Hero: "Collectivisation?"

Lone Winter King: "That's right. We'll classify a few households of free colonists, up to ten, as a collective. We'll supply them with facilities and treat them as a single administrative unit. This applies for taxes and corvee labour as well. We'll distribute seedlings and other necessities to the collectives so that they can combine their labour for easier development. If there's any more trouble, then the patrols will have to deal with it. If we receive news that one of the families are making trouble, then we'll move them to another collective."

The Hero: "It's a good idea, but it seems troublesome."

Lone Winter King: "That's right, it is troublesome. It'll probably take a lot of effort. On top of that, this is just a transitional stage. Right now, we'll probably have to force the colonists into these collectives, but in future, I hope to create a freer system of collectives. It's going to be tough, but there's no choice. I believe this to be right. The paper that the Scholar left behind should be helpful with this."

The Hero: "Is that so, why?"

Butler: "For this sort of thing, we'll need to keep a massive amount of records. We'll have to start an extremely detailed census-taking exercise, and put into place a massive records-keeping division."

The Hero: "Huh... Well, this is completely out of the fields of expertise from both me and the Female Paladin."

----- The Kingdom of the Lake, Capitol, the Headquarters of the Union

Shrewd Merchant: "...The price of wheat has started rising abnormally."

Young Merchant: "It's started."

Shrewd Merchant: "Yes. It's up 64% from last year and 9 points from last week."

Young Merchant: "It was a good idea to move our headquarters to the Kingdom of the Lake. It would be disastrous if the information came in late."

Shrewd Merchant: "Shall we begin?"

Young Merchant: "Are you hesitating?"

Shrewd Merchant: "No, I too was born a merchant. I have the stomach for something like this. Let's see the results."

Young Merchant: "Exactly. Are the preparations for the communications and the fast horses done?"

Shrewd Merchant: "All ready."

Young Merchant: "This too is about to become a battleground. We shall not sleep nor rest."

Assistants: "Yes!"

Young Merchant: "Then, let's begin."

Shrewd Merchant: "Yes."

Young Merchant: "We will now commence with the operation for the Union to corner essential goods like wheat, metal, salt and charcoal. Buy wheat up to 320 points of last year's prices and the rest up to 240 points."

Shrewd Merchant: "..."

Young Merchant: "Of course, do not needlessly spend money. Make sure you stay vigilant throughout the entire process and look out for our interests. Except this time, we've got more interests than just profit. We have to maintain the price of the good."

Shrewd Merchant: "Yes."

Young Merchant: "I expect that the political situation will deteriorate. Make sure to pay attention to the shipment and storage of goods. Mercenaries usually only accept money as payment. It is necessary to secure their allegiance so we can try getting them to accept direct payment in wheat or other commodities. In this case, let's arrange to pay them weekly rather than monthly."

Shrewd Merchant: "Understood."

Young Merchant: "Have you drawn up the Wheat Futures?"

Shrewd Merchant: "The contracts have all been arranged."

Young Merchant: "Stay in contact with large-scale landlords and noblemen, please."

Shrewd Merchant: "..."

Young Merchant: "Then, here it begins."

Shrewd Merchant: "?"

Young Merchant: "The Church faction is probably going to disapprove of our cornering the market."

Shrewd Merchant: "Yes, they're already expressing some measure of displeasure."

Young Merchant: "What would we do if they began ratting us out to the Church? We would have to throw away all the profit that lay in front of us, or we would lose a lot of our trading rights, that's something we can't allow as merchants."

Shrewd Merchant: "...What should we do?"

Young Merchant: "We use a Black Hand. Send the three Councilmen away for two weeks."

Shrewd Merchant: "..."

Young Merchant: "We'll finish all we need in two weeks. Once we begin something like this, we can't stop it halfway."

Shrewd Merchant: "I understand."

Young Merchant: "Let's disguise our purchases then. I'm sure that no one in the Central Continent is expecting something like this, but we can't hold it for long. The disguise will probably be broken within two weeks."

----- The Holy Empire, a Coastal City, the Noblemen's Quarter

Coastal City Citizen: "Huh!? What!?"

Commodities Merchant: "Yeah, didn't I say already? One sack of wheat is now eight silver pieces."

Coastal City Citizen: "Are you stupid? What kind of price is that?"

Commodities Merchant: "You haven't been here in a while, have you?"

Coastal City Citizen: "Well, yeah. I've come all this way with my cart to buy things from you. You know you can feed a family of eight with that, right?!"

Travelling Merchant: "Hey, gimme some wheat."

Commodities Merchant: "Sure, how much do you want?"

Travelling Merchant: "How much is it?"

Commodities Merchant: "One sack of wheat is going at eight silver pieces. We've also got coarse, second-grade wheat at six-and-a-half silver pieces. Barley is going at five silver pieces."

Travelling Merchant: "Show me the second class."

Commodities Merchant: "Here it is!"

Travelling Merchant: "Hmm... There're bugs mixed with this."

Commodities Merchant: "Nowadays, you'll find that common everywhere. I've got plenty of buyers."

Travelling Merchant: "Fine. Give me twenty-five sacks."

Commodities Merchant: "No problem, it's a sale then."

Fills sack.

Coastal City Citizen: "...Dammit, fine, give me some second class wheat too."

Commodities Merchant: "Sure. One sack for seven silver pieces."

Coastal City Citizen: "Huh!? Wasn't it just six-and-a-half silver pieces!"

Commodities Merchant: "Sir, this second class wheat was going at four silver pieces a sack last week. It's probably better for me not to sell anything and just keep it all."

Coastal City Citizen: "...Dammit! Two sacks. Four sacks of barley as well."

Commodities Merchant: "That's a great purchase you've just made."

Baker: "Cheap! Cheap! Buttered grape bread! Two for fifteen copper pieces."

Fills sack.

Coastal City Citizen: "How is that cheap? It's so small as well. How could that be worth fifteen copper pieces? Just what is going on? ...There's nothing for it."

Let's get some lentils and peas. This year, we don't have the Blessings of the Spirit of Light. Well, let's hope it gets better next year."

Coastal City Citizen: "Ehh?!"

Merchant: "Lentils are going at four silver pieces a sack. Peas at six and a half silver pieces."

Coastal City Citizen: "What the hell?! I understood that the wheat harvest was bad. It's true that the weather hasn't been too brilliant. But didn't the legume crops turn out great this year?!"

Merchant: "Well, that's true. But— "

Coastal City Citizen: "Ahh."

Merchant: "Just think about it. Those people who usually eat wheat will switch to eating barley or peas when the price of wheat rises too high, right? Those people who usually eat barley or peas will switch to other foods like beans, buckwheat or walnuts, when the price goes up as well, right? Understand?"

The demand for legumes is far higher than usual in the Human World right now. That's why the price is going up."

Coastal City Citizen: "Why is this happening..."

Merchant: "I've been working hard to try to lower the price as well."

Coastal City Citizen: "...?"

Merchant: "That being said, the noblemen are speaking about fixing the prices of beans, commodities and things like bread next week."

Coastal City Citizen: "Fixing...?"

Merchant: "Yeah, they're going to fix the prices."

Coastal City Citizen: "Brilliant! Then as long as I buy within month, I can get wheat and beans cheaper!"

Fills sack.

Travelling Merchant: "My, my."

Coastal City Citizen: "Ahh, you're the merchant from earlier."

Travelling Merchant: "Didn't I meet you at the Commodities Merchant's?"

Coastal City Citizen: "Yeah, you're a Travelling Merchant, right? How are you?"

Travelling Merchant: "You don't understand anything, do you?"

Merchant: "There's no choice. He's never had any connection to the farm anyway."

Coastal City Citizen: "What do you mean? What's going on?"

Merchant: "...Huh."

Travelling Merchant: "I probably shouldn't say anything, but I'm a traveller so it probably shouldn't affect me too much."

Merchant: "I've been weighing the beans."

Coastal City Citizen: "And?"

Travelling Merchant: "The prices of wheat, barley and oats have been rising constantly. I sincerely don't believe that the prices are going to fall any time next month. What do you think will happen if they do fix the prices of wheat and bread? They'll all probably go bankrupt. If the price of wheat remains this high, then Commodities Merchants and Bakeries won't even be able to open."

Coastal City Citizen: "Ah!"

Merchant: "That's right. Even though the prices are rising, they're still trying to sell everything they have. Of course, they keep enough for themselves so they don't starve to death."

Coastal City Citizen: "...That's—"

Merchant: "Alright... How about this? If it really is as he says, then none of the shops will be open next month. You should probably buy some bacon and beans, or at the very least some barley, in preparation."

Coastal City Citizen: "I-I-I understand!"

Merchant: "I'm closing up for today, so I'll give you a discount."

Coastal City Citizen: "Give me two sacks of lentils and peas."

Merchant: "That'll be twenty silver pieces."

Travelling Merchant: "Give me twenty sacks of peas."

Merchant: "Alright. Give me a hand with these then!"

---- The Palace of Winter, a Large Room, Strategy Committee

Disciple Merchant: "Your Majesty, Your Majesty!"

Assistant: "Wha—"

Seneschal: "Oh, it's the Disciple Merchant? What's up?"

Disciple Merchant: "I have an urgent report that needs to be made. Where is His Majesty the King?"

Butler: "Ohh, Disciple Merchant. He's over there."

Lone Winter King: "What's up?"

Disciple Merchant: "Your Majesty. It's an emergency. I have a report. Something has just been announced."

Assistant: "Ho—"

Lone Winter King: "What's wrong? Is it a tax issue? Or has something happened with the military?"

Disciple Merchant: "Your Majesty, it is indeed a tax issue."

Assistant drags flipchart over.

Lone Winter King: "Read out your report."

Disciple Merchant: "I shouldn't, Your Majesty. Time is of the essence."

Butler: "How proper..."

Disciple Merchant: "I'm still learning how one talks with a King."

Seneschal: "He has indeed grown."

Disciple Merchant: "Allow me to explain this in simple terms. Flip!"

Assistant: "Yes!"

Disciple Merchant: "Right now, the price of goods which the Central Continent imports from the Southern Kingdoms is rising quickly. At the same time, the volume of gold being transferred is increasing."

Assistant: "Yes."

Lone Winter King: "What do you mean?"

Disciple Merchant: "In other words, something you could buy for five gold pieces last week costs ten this week, twenty next week, and it just keeps on rising."

Butler: "Won't that be tough on the people?"

Disciple Merchant: "Of course. But, in response, noblemen are expending their gold reserves in large quantities. If the gentry disseminates their gold to the people, they might be able to achieve some sort of equality, but at present, that the prices aren't something which the people can afford is the reality of the situation. That's why we need to act fast. Oi, flip!"

Assistant: "Yes!" Flips.

Disciple Merchant: "As you can see from this chart, prices are currently twice than last year, this is an unprecedented speed."

Assistant: "Mmm."

Seneschal: "I understand... But why are you so worked up?"

Butler: "This is a really big deal."

Lone Winter King: "Hmm."

Disciple Merchant: "This is probably the work of somebody trying to corner the market on wheat."

Lone Winter King: "Work? For what purpose?"

Disciple Merchant: "That's not important. We don't have the luxury right now. But against such a skilled player, we do not have the upper hand."

Seneschal: "Player?"

Disciple Merchant: "Ahh, forget I said that."

Disciple Merchant: "What's important is figuring out what will happen from now on."

Lone Winter King: "Yeah, our response is the top priority. What do you predict will happen?"

Disciple Merchant: "Within the Kingdoms of the Central Continent, a massive shift in wealth distribution is taking place. Already, the wealth of the cities are being gathered by large merchants, landlords, feudal lords, noblemen and nobility. However, this price inflation is affecting the prices of all the goods, it's gotten to the state where there's not much point holding cash anymore. As time goes by, all the prices have been rising incredibly."

Butler: "Hmm..."



Player: This refers to a player in a game. However, in this case, what they are playing with are massive amounts of money in the form of wheat moving across the market. In other words, the one who loses the game also loses this massive sum of money.

Disciple Merchant: “As a result, there is currently significant government expenditure, but the effect of this is limited due to the actions of a group of determined noblemen. Due to this group of determined noblemen, the flow is unlikely to cease. Oi, page three.”

Assistant: “Yes!”

Butler: “?!”

Disciple Merchant: “That’s right, there’s still somewhere where the prices have yet to rise, somewhere far away, in other words, the Southern United Kingdoms. It is likely that their next course of action will be to begin purchasing large sums of goods from us, and we are already seeing signs of a segment of society at work here.”

Lone Winter King: “If that happens, then the prices in our Kingdom?”

Disciple Merchant: “Will undoubtedly rise.”

Assistant: “That’s incredible.”

Butler: “How do we counter this?”

Disciple Merchant: "Allow me to elaborate. First, we need to determine that such an economic attack will actually take place. If the other side has no intention of doing so in the first place, that would be a disaster. This is a risk. If we get it wrong, the Kingdom may even collapse."

Lone Winter King: "I understand."

Disciple Merchant: "Firstly, tariffs. With an emphasis on wheat, we'll impose a tariff on all goods produced within the Tripartite Union intended for export."

Lone Winter King: "Like a transit tax?"

Disciple Merchant: "Flip."

Assistant: "Yes!" *Flips.*

Disciple Merchant: "It's similar but far more limited. This only applies to goods which are leaving the country. Whether it's grain or potatoes, one carriage of goods needs to pay a tax of ten gold pieces."

Seneschal: "Ten!? That's a bit harsh."

Disciple Merchant: "What? We have to be more concerned about our own pain and suffering. If we don't impose this tax, all of our food will end up being sold to the Central Continent and we'll all starve to death."

Seneschal: "Is that so? Then I guess even twenty would be fine too."

Butler: "We can't allow a famine to take place."

Disciple Merchant: "Next is to restructure the wage salaries for people connected to the Palace."

Lone Winter King: "What do you mean?"

Disciple Merchant: "At present, the relevant question is, 'How much is one gold piece worth?' In other words, if one can usually buy three sacks of wheat with one gold piece, how many can one buy now?"

Butler: "Hmm."

Disciple Merchant: "Usually, two gold pieces are about a month's salary, but we're not sure about now. Even if it's still the same now, we won't be sure about the future. In other words, this is the collapse of the fiat currency system. That is why at least part of the currency system is likely to collapse. Important occupations like soldiers and ministers should no longer be paid in gold, but in physical, real value goods like wheat."



Government Expenditure: This refers either to the government spending money on public works and other goods, or giving money to the people to spend. This introduces demand for goods into the economy and can help to boost the economy during tough times.

Seneschal: "How about potatoes? They're delicious and there're lots of them."

Disciple Merchant: "Flip!"

Assistant: "Yes!" *Flips.*

Disciple Merchant: "Luckily, our Kingdom and the Tripartite Union has made the shift from wheat to potatoes. This is an unforeseen stroke of luck among our misfortunes."

The potato is currently seen by the Central Continent as a heretical crop. Barring some miracle, we'll never be able to sell any. We can use that to our advantage."

Lone Winter King: "By fixing the price."

Disciple Merchant: "That's right. We can pay a fixed amount of money to buy potatoes from producers. We can then sell potatoes at a fixed price to people who eat them and to food establishments in the cities. We can adjust this price once every two months. We can use the potatoes to prevent famine among the settlers. By doing this, we should at least be able to stabilise the faith that the people of the Tripartite Union have in the currency. In other words, how many potatoes can they buy with one gold piece?"

If we can assure them that one gold piece will be able to buy one month's worth of potatoes, then we give meaning to the currency again. On top of that, there are a lot of other good points. Potatoes keep better than wheat too, right? Didn't you encourage its production?"

Lone Winter King: "That's how we'll deal with it?"

Disciple Merchant: "For now, those are our financial options. But there's more."

Lone Winter King: "What?"

Disciple Merchant: "This isn't my specialty, but if the price of food goes up in the Central Continent, there are going to be people starving. Of course, the state law and order will likely weaken too."

Butler: "Is that so?"

Lone Winter King: "Mm? What's wrong, old man?"

Butler: "No, no, it's just that there have been rumours of mercenary groups becoming bandits. They get hungry and they just go off the grid accept to attack our convoys."

Lone Winter King: "There is talk of such a thing."

Disciple Merchant: "If they're bandits, then they shouldn't be too concerned with whether or not the potato is a heretical crop. They may even come to raid and pillage cities and urban centres."

Seneschal: "This is my responsibility! Please rest easy. I have activated three times the usual numbers for the Kingdom of Winter. But how will you deal with them?"

Butler: "They may be bandits now, but they used to be mercenaries before. They're surely very proud."

Seneschal: "Yes!"

Disciple Merchant: "There's one more point, and that's about the emigrant population.

Winter is coming, and if the Central Continent gets any colder, there's likely to be a famine. If that happens, we can expect a large-scale migration across to our borders."

Lone Winter King: "If that's the case, it's just what we want then."

Disciple Merchant: "That's only if we can find something for them to eat. To fulfil that, I advise that we should increase the potato harvest substantially."

Lone Winter King: "I understand the details, you have advised me on them well."

Disciple Merchant: "No, no, this is my responsibility."

Assistant: "Yes."

Lone Winter King: "I respect your views very much. I'd like to make you the Finance Minister starting today."

Disciple Merchant: "Eh?"

Lone Winter King: "It's a Marquis position. It comes with a salary and a position."

Disciple Merchant: "No."

Lone Winter King: "Don't be modest. As Finance Minister, you'll have three times as much work. I'm counting on you."

Disciple Merchant: "W-wa-wait! That's not what I mean! I'm going to die!"

Lone Winter King: "Hahahahaha. I'll make the announcement soon. If there's anything, make sure you come along too. Oh that's right, I've got a state dinner tonight. Come along! It'll be fun!"

Seneschal: "My condolences."

Butler: "Hurry up and get married. Boobs have a powerful impact on the working ability of young men."

Disciple Merchant flinches.

Assistant: "..."

Lone Winter King: "Hahahahaha. Alright then, I'm going!"

Butler: "Wait, Young Man! I'm coming too."

Lone Winter King and Butler walk off.

Disciple Merchant: "..."

Assistant: "Are you alright?"

Disciple Merchant: "It's probably impossible."

Assistant: "Shall I get you some tea?"

Disciple Merchant: "Please."

Assistant: "Yes ♪" *Scampers off.*

Disciple Merchant: "But... This flow..."

Disciple Merchant: (I do know who is behind this. To pull off such a major feat of economic warfare is only possible if you're the Union. They've managed to corner the market so quickly. But what is their objective? Are we their enemy?)

Or their ally? How can I, the mere third son of a merchant, hope to take on a behemoth like the Union. But... Aghhhh. I can't run away from it this time.

What are they doing buying wheat and all these daily essentials? How are they even paying for all of this? They don't seem to be buying anything else. They must be using some sort of contract, unless they're paying for this out of their pocket... What would be the point? Is this just some investment? They increase the price of food products, then sell it all and make a killing — is it possible that's their entire objective?)

----- The Courtyard of Memories, the Memories of the Demon King

The Chief Maid: “—!”

The Demon King tinkers around.

The Chief Maid: “—!—!”

The Demon King: “Oh, did I get it wrong?”

The Chief Maid: “—! Hey, answer when I call you, please!”

The Demon King: “Ohh, you shocked me there!”

The Chief Maid: “I’m the one who’s shocked!”

The Demon King: “In that case we can be shocked together.”

The Chief Maid: “Is that all?”

The Demon King: “Mmm.”

The Chief Maid: “Mm? —! When did you last change?!”

The Demon King: “It’s fine. Lions and bears don’t change either. Neither do Dragons or Massacre Troopers. They don’t do that, and yet they’re still alive.”

The Chief Maid: "That's not good. You can't be a human-shaped bear. You're already a grown-up woman. You should start to act like it."

The Demon King: "If it's about age, I've been this way for a hundred years."

The Chief Maid: "Right, that's because of the Cosmic Library, right?"

The Demon King: "I'm not good at dressing myself."

The Chief Maid: "Aghhh! Enough! Stop saying that—! Are you really going to be the Demon King?!"

The Demon King: "Yeah..."

The Chief Maid: "Don't shine that in my face!"

The Demon King: "Sorry." *Turns off.*

The Chief Maid: "Don't expose the flab on your chest either."

The Demon King: "I can't?"

The Chief Maid: "...Don't tell me, it's not for me?"

The Demon King: "No, it's not."

The Chief Maid: "That's good, but..."

The Demon King: "It's really just something convenient for me. It's a bit strange that you're concerned at all."

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Demon King: "My coronation is next month."

The Chief Maid: "—This means you're going to become the Demon King. You do understand that, right?"

The Demon King: "Hmm."

The Chief Maid: "Have you entered the Palace of Death? I don't know about the other Races, but this Race tends to spend a lot of time gaining knowledge in the Palace of Death, doesn't it?"

The Demon King: "By this Race, I suppose you're referring to our Race."

The Chief Maid: "I'm a... new member to the Race."

The Demon King: "It doesn't matter if you're a new member, we're one Race."

The Chief Maid: "More importantly, will you be going there to absorb the wisdom of the Demon Kings of History?"

The Demon King: "To be precise, I won't so much be absorbing as being contaminated by them."

The Chief Maid: "Isn't it the same thing?"

The Demon King: "It's completely different. The contamination will change my entire body. If I were just absorbing there would be a way to revert things, but when I'm being contaminated, there definitely isn't."

The Chief Maid: "Is it something extremely bad?"

The Demon King: "No, well, there are limits. Everything has its pros and cons. Even though I'll be contaminated, I'll still be me. Till the end, my sins are still my responsibilities."

The Chief Maid: "All I'm hearing are the cons."

The Demon King: "Moreover, absorbing occurs in an instant, while being contaminated takes time? Though it wouldn't seem that way."

The Chief Maid: "Huh?"

The Demon King: "I'll be in the Palace of Death for just a short while."

The Chief Maid: "Eh?"

The Demon King: "I'll be inside for a while, and then I'll be right out."

The Chief Maid: "Huh!? Wh-What are you saying!? Just like that, you'll receive Demon King-level combat ability? How can it be that the Demon World can be ruled like that? To begin with, how are you going to fight!?"

The Demon King: "I can rule without violence."

The Chief Maid: "What are you saying?"

The Demon King: "Take a look at NDC Number 300. Humans have an individual combat ability far below that of even a middle-level Demon yet they're perfectly capable of ruling themselves. Combat ability was never a prerequisite to governance."

The Chief Maid: "That may be so, but then why would you want to be the Demon King? Excuse me for saying this but you seem like a research insect."

The Demon King: "This is another life experience, you understand, right?"

The Chief Maid: "Life experience..."

The Demon King: "Yeah, I want to experience both worlds like they have never been experienced before. And if possible, I'd like to meet my destiny as well."

The Chief Maid: "Eh?"

The Demon King: "Look."

Heart beats very quickly.

The Chief Maid: "This... is...?"

The Demon King: "He was born last week."

The Chief Maid: "A human... boy?"

The Demon King: "I used a long distance telegraphic lens so the resolution is quite bad but according to that Infinite Library, this could be the one."

The Chief Maid: "A boy...?"

The Demon King: "The Hero."

The Chief Maid: "...?!"

The Demon King: "One of only two Living Singularities in this world. The Child of Destiny. I'm sure he'll be very handsome in twenty-five years' time."



NDC: This refers to the Nippon Decimal Classification system which is used by Japanese libraries in order to differentiate library books by genre. Number 300 are books on Social Sciences, within this, Number 310 are books on Political Sciences.

The Chief Maid: "Don't tell me..."

The Demon King: "Yes. Hehehe — I would really like to meet this person."

The Chief Maid: "B-But, he's the one who has been prophesised to kill you, isn't he!? What are you thinking of!"

The Demon King: "That's fine too."

The Chief Maid: "—"

The Demon King: "He will come to meet me. He will come from a great distance... He'll come from somewhere we'll never have contact. Well, I'll probably die by his sword, but before I get killed, I should at least get to say hello."

Or at least, salutations, or something like that. And if a miracle occurs — maybe I'll even get to rub that black hair of his. It'll definitely be fluffy-fluffy and wonderful."

The Chief Maid: "You can't be serious."

The Demon King: "I'm completely serious. This is the only chance I have, in order to see a 'future which has never been seen before.' In order to create a story which has never been told even in that Library — in order to meet my destiny."

The Chief Maid: "But... even so."

The Demon King: "It's decided."

The Chief Maid: "What will you do about the Wars of Succession?"

The Demon King: "Well, we'll act appropriately."

The Chief Maid: "They've gathered six brave warriors and fighters from throughout the land, right? You've got no chance of beating them. And if you don't defeat them, you can't become the Demon King."

The Demon King: "Well, I've got my work cut out. I'm not good at fighting but I'm very good at balancing profits and losses."

The Chief Maid: "That's impossible."

The Demon King: "How cruel."

The Chief Maid: "—!— Are you being stupid!?"

The Demon King: "Winning or losing is not the issue here. This is the only chance. The only problem is that whether we win or lose, will we regret gambling... Or should we try gambling?"

The Chief Maid: "... You—"

The Demon King: "Mmm? Did I say something strange?"

The Chief Maid: "Nope."

The Demon King: “...”

The Chief Maid: “...Mistress.”

The Demon King: “What is it?”

The Demon King: “Mistress. You’re a cruel, cruel fool.”

The Demon King: “What are you saying? I’ve been called the Professor of Lost Worlds.”

The Chief Maid: “But you’re still a fool.”

The Demon King: “Hmm.”

The Chief Maid: “Allow me to be your maid.”

The Demon King: “Eh?”

The Chief Maid: “I will be your follower.”

The Demon King: “What are you saying? Don’t be stupid. This is my dream, my chance. I don’t need to drag other people in with me.”

The Chief Maid: “In that case, you should give it up. When you’re the King, when you’re the ruler of the Demon World, you don’t do anything else but drag other people in with you! Are you saying that you’d bet your life and everything you’ve worked for for that dream?”

The Demon King: “—”The Chief Maid: “I also have a dream as well, Mistress. I want to pursue the Way of the Maid. I am deeply indebted to you. But above this, I’ve never seen anyone as useless as you, Mistress. You’re both really simple yet incredibly gifted. You really are the perfect Mistress.”

The Demon King: “Is that enough? I’m the one who’s got a fool next to me. It’s like I’ve died, am I dead? Really.”

The Chief Maid: “That’s because you don’t know about maids, Mistress.”



Living Singularity: A singularity is a highly unique point. In other words, the two Living Singularities are the Demon King and the Hero. To this world, they are the most special existences around which the Fate of the Universe now revolves.

The Demon King: “Huh?”

The Chief Maid: “No matter what sort of books you read, they always extol the excellent qualities of Maids, like their domestic ability, governorship, problem solving ability. Much has even been written in praise about their battle ability, hasn’t it? In fact, the Maids in the Early Victorians and the Japanese people in the stories of the Library have often been elevated to the status of living goddesses.”

The Demon King: “Is that... so?”

The Chief Maid: “Yes, be assured.”

The Demon King: “Really.”

The Chief Maid: “I’ll make you some tea.”

The Demon King: “Ah, ahh. Thanks. Umm... Chief Maid.”

The Chief Maid: “I don’t have any subordinates, though.”

The Demon King: “Even without subordinates, you’re the Chief.”

The Chief Maid: "Thank you." *Smiles.*

The Demon King: "But, that's... Is it alright?"

The Chief Maid: "Yes, of course."

The Demon King: "..."

The Chief Maid: "Your dream is to wait for the Chosen One, there's nothing else I can do but support you through it. That's what happens when you're the Chief Maid."

---- **The Central Continent, Kingdom of Mist, House of Nobles**

Steward: "My Lord! My Lord!"

Obese Nobleman: "Mmm. Cut me another plum."

Young Maid: "Yes..."

Steward: "My Lord!"

Obese Nobleman: "Hey! Shut up! I hear you! What do you want to say, you noisy person!"

Steward: "It's here!"

Obese Nobleman: "The mustering call?!"

Steward: "That is correct!"

Rips open envelope and pulls out mustering call.

Obese Nobleman: "Hmph. The Commanding General is going to be the Grey King of the Kingdom of Mist... I knew we would get mustered but I didn't think it would be this soon. Hahahahahaha.

Those Barbarian Kings of the South, let's stop with this pointless negotiating back and forth. The truth is that it's going to end very quickly."

Steward: "What shall we do?"

Obese Nobleman: "Send word for an emergency muster to all the lords in the land!"

Steward: "Yes!"

Obese Nobleman: "What a splendid timing. We've spent most of our military budget buying up all the wheat. That Wheat Futures thing just appeared this year as well. My treasury is completely empty now."

Young Maid: "U-umm... Here's the plum..."

Obese Nobleman: "Haha. Oh, how sweet." *Bites.*

Obese Nobleman: "With this much money from the King, it should be easy enough to pay the salaries of our knights and the mercenaries as well..."

Obese Nobleman: "We can get 700, no, 1000 soldiers, maybe even more than the Grey King. If we do this, we might be able to win the support of the Bishop. It might help him win the White Cross of Light, no... Maybe even the Primarchy."

Obese Nobleman: "The price of wheat has gone up again. But with this much money, we can afford to do quite a bit more. Hahahaha. I hear the pork in the South is particularly delicious."

Obese Nobleman: "That's because their treasuries are overflowing with gold, hehehehe. We can hold our heads up high now. This war... Well, the mustering will take place in half a month's time. It's winter, but it's still best to get a move on before the snow accumulates around the New Year's. It seems the Grey King is getting very pumped about this as well."

Steward: "I shall draft a reply right now!"

Obese Nobleman: "Alright. Draw up a list of every knight under my command! Select and distribute the leadership roles and appointments! Prepare the weapons!"

----- The Kingdom of the Lake, a Rich District

Young Merchant: "Hahahahaha. And how is your daughter?"

Incredibly Rich Nobleman: "Haha. My daughter is at a marriageable age. Her mischief is really overheating. Haha."

Young Merchant: "No, no, a lady is like a butterfly dancing among the flowers. I'm sure there will be many brave knights and illustrious noblemen vying for her hand in marriage." *Smiles.*

Incredibly Rich Nobleman: "Do you really think so? Mm? You have a certain position in the Union, do you not?"

Young Merchant: "No, no, someone like me is far too young. It would be highly premature to have such an opportunity to get close to the nobility like this."

Incredibly Rich Nobleman: "Hahaha, how humble you are. What do you think? I'm going to have a ball in my territory, there'll be many noblewomen at attendance. You're invited."

Young Merchant: "But I'm nothing more than an uncultured simpleton..."

Incredibly Rich Nobleman: "Ahahaha! Please don't worry. It'll be a party to celebrate the coming of the new winter, so... it's the kind of party with hundreds of names attending."

Young Merchant: "How splendid." *Smiles.*

Incredibly Rich Nobleman: "Hahahaha! Today's negotiations were certainly nice. So, one Pigeon's Blood will set me back 450,000, right? Hehehehe. What a great deal."

Young Merchant: "Thank you for your kind patronage."

Incredibly Rich Nobleman: "Ahh, allow me to introduce you to some noblemen as well. In that case, I'll give you a discount when we confirm the date of the ball."

Carriage rolls in...

Young Merchant: "Ah, it appears my carriage has arrived."

Incredibly Rich Nobleman: "Indeed. Then please take care."

Young Merchant: "Thank you very much."

Incredibly Rich Nobleman: "Mmm. I await the day of our next business negotiations. See you again!"

Carriage door closes. Carriage rolls off.

Young Merchant: "..."

Young Merchant: "Heh... That was nice. 450,000 for one ruby. That's really not bad for just one night. It's a bit strange that it's being paid for in wheat, and he didn't give me any sort of guarantees either way... It's not like I can eat rubies in any case."



Young Merchant: "It's cold. Well, it's winter in the Kingdom of the Lake too, I guess. Winter's about to come to the South." *Coughs.* Pigeon's Blood: A type of ruby which is a deep, murky red, similar to the colour of pigeon's blood. It is the very highest grade of ruby.

Cold wind howls.

Young Merchant: "Shall we go back? Well, we could go back to the Military Headquarters tonight as well."

Carriage rolls on.

Beggar: "Please, sir."

Young Merchant: "..."

Young Merchant: "How inappropriate."

Carriage hits someone.

????: "Ah."

Young Merchant: "Oh I'm sorry."

Young Merchant: "Who would be wearing a cape and a hood so late at night? A Northerner? She sounds like a young woman..."

????: "No, no."

Young Merchant: "It's dangerous for a young lady to be walking around so late at night. Please be careful and return home as soon as you can."

????: "I've been waiting for this Honoured One."

Young Merchant: "Huh?"

????: "You."

Young Merchant: "Huh?"

????: "We've met once before."

Young Merchant: "Huh? Oh. As I thought, I recognised the cape."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Indeed. I apologise." *Removes cape.*

Young Merchant: "Ah. Ahh!"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Do you remember me?" *Smiles.*

Young Merchant: "What are you doing here?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "I've been looking for this Honoured One."

Young Merchant: "Why?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "You're a merchant. You're the kind of person who can get his hands on anything. At least that's what I heard at the banquet..."

Young Merchant: "That's a merchant, alright..."

Fire Dragon Lady: "?"

Young Merchant: "Your... tail."

Fire Dragon Lady: "What about it?" *Waves tail.*

Young Merchant: "No, this is a bad place. Let's move somewhere else."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Yes, I have something to tell this Honoured One."

----- The Kingdom of the Lake, a Rich District, an Inn rented by the Young Merchant

Young Merchant: "You're very reckless."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Why?"

Young Merchant: "Uhh, humans don't have tails."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Oh, that's right." *Grins.*

Young Merchant: "Would you like some tea?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "It would be great if you had some firewater... It's really cold here."

Young Merchant: "It's much colder here than where you come from, I guess."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Since coming here, my tail has never been warm. The Human World sure is a freezing place."

Young Merchant: "Well, that's because it's currently winter."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Winter..."

Young Merchant: "Don't you have that in the Demon World?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "I've never heard that word before. Well, I understand what it means though. The closer you are to the Second Gate, the colder it is, and the further away you are, the warmer it is. That's the Demon World for you."

Young Merchant opens door.

Young Merchant: "Mmm... Come in then."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Thank you very much."

Young Merchant: "So, milady, why are you here?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "I have come to meet with this Honoured One."

Young Merchant: "Could you stop calling me 'This Honoured One'?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Then what shall I call you?"

Young Merchant: "Merchant."

Fire Dragon Lady: "In that case, I have come to meet with the Merchant."

Young Merchant: "Huh... All the way from the Demon World? Wait, using Teleportation Magic? Demon Magic is far stronger than Human Magic after all."

Fire Dragon Lady: "That's not true. According to my father, the Ceremonial Magic of ancient Humans is far more powerful. Demons are only adept at harnessing the superficial layers of Magic. I came to the Human World using a Teleportation Seal."

Young Merchant: "How did you know where I am? Where is the Hero?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "No, I kept it a secret from him— I am here of my personal capacity. I found you using Seeking Magic. It's a very convenient spell." *Chuckles.*

Young Merchant: "You certainly sound very pleased with yourself."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Well, I have been fairly successful after all."

Young Merchant: "Quite right. I am definitely impressed by your abilities. I'm sure it takes a certain type of person to have accomplished this task."

Young Merchant: "Alright then, what sort of goods are you looking for, milady?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Salt."

Young Merchant: "How much?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "I'm not sure. But it's important."

Young Merchant: "What a vague request."

Fire Dragon Lady: "That's why I'm here."

Young Merchant: "...?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "The volume of such requests is likely within your field of expertise, that's why I've come to look for you."

Young Merchant: "Hmm."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Salt is a luxury good in the Demon World. We would like to import some."

Young Merchant: "..."

Fire Dragon Lady: "..." *Tail sways.*

Young Merchant: "..."

Fire Dragon Lady: "..." *Drinks wine.*

Young Merchant: "..."

Fire Dragon Lady: "...It really warms you up."

Young Merchant: "You can drink the entire pot."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Did you hear me?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "...?"

Young Merchant: "You know this is a real puzzle, right?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "I'm a foolish girl, but I'm sure this wouldn't be a puzzle to an expert like yourself."

Young Merchant: "Don't you think you're thinking too highly of me?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "A smart girl would gather all the possible information about a subject before acting. But for a girl to gather so much information on the subject will require so much time and effort, it isn't likely to be of use to anybody. These are the Lessons of the Dragon I learnt from my mother. To get as many merchants into our hands as possible, we're willing to solve as many puzzles as we need. To secure the help of you merchants would certainly be my greatest honour and pride."

Young Merchant: "If it's just salt, then there's no problem."

Fire Dragon Lady: "...Ahh, I feel warm to my tail." *Smiles.*

Young Merchant: "You've really drunk a lot."

Fire Dragon Lady: "The wine in the Human World is really something."

Young Merchant: "Is this your first time in the Human World?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Of course it is. It's a very precious experience. There're lots of delicious things here like bread. It's a lot more expensive than I'd heard though, it cost a lot of my travelling expenses... And this Church thing sure is fantastic. Their hymns and carols are something else altogether."

They've got that instrument, the one as big as an entire building. That was a truly heavenly experience. You humans sure know how to enjoy things."



Instrument as Big as a Building: This refers to the Pipe Organ. One pipe is required in order to make a different note or quality of sound. In order to make sounds which span 5 octaves (60 notes) with 5 different types of sounds, $60 \times 5 = 300$ pipes are necessary. Moreover, in order to produce a richer and deeper timbre of sound, a single sound may require a few pipes. For this purpose, the larger-scale Pipe Organs may even use thousands of pipes, resulting in an entire

building being needed to house some of these organs.

Young Merchant: "...Will you stay in the Human World for the time being?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "?"

Young Merchant: "To make arrangements for the Salt."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Really?"

Young Merchant: "Yeah."

Fire Dragon Lady: "I am grateful."

Young Merchant: "It would be unbelievably troublesome if you were to run into some danger here."

Fire Dragon Lady: "The tail?"

Young Merchant: "Yeah, well, the horns too."

Fire Dragon Lady: "I'll cover them up. I think it would be really interesting to see the way people panic when they see them, though."

Young Merchant: "..."

Fire Dragon Lady: "..." *Waves tail.*

Young Merchant: "You—"

Fire Dragon Lady: "?"

Young Merchant: "Your existence really throws a spanner in the works. Don't you think there's still too much we don't know?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "What about?"

Young Merchant: "Unfortunately, about cooperation."

----- The Winter Palace, the Audience Hall

Door closes.

The Hero: "Your Majesty!"

Butler: "The Hero has arrived."

The Hero: "They've declared war?!"

Lone Winter King: "That's right. I received a formal Declaration of War this morning. On top of this, at about the same time, I also received a Writ of Excommunication from the Church."

The Hero: "That's too fast."

Seneschal: "I apologise. I had better expectations."

Lone Winter King: "No, I had no choice — The situations have changed."

The Hero: "Situations...?"

Lone Winter King: "Mmm, we're on a tough path. Starting with wheat, the prices of goods have risen all across the board."

The Hero: "Prices? So we can't buy food?"

Lone Winter King: "It seems that way. You can hear the details from the Disciple Merchant. I'm not completely sure about the structures or reasons for this myself. But basically, the prices are twice as high as they were last year."

Butler: "To top it off, it's also winter."

Lone Winter King: "I fear this price hike could be the machinations of some of the higher-ups in the Church. If the price of wheat rises, peasants are going to find dealing with the winter very difficult. It's the same with mercenaries too... They will probably try to invade the Southern United Kingdoms, plunder us, and use it to tide through the winter. If those snooty noblemen who don't care at all about the pathetic state of their impoverished peasants don't want to go bankrupt instantly from those insane price hikes, they're going to have to make this a very short and decisive war. At any rate, that's probably why they've rushed to give us such an urgent declaration."

The Hero: "Is that so..."

Seneschal: "Your Majesty, the precise words of the Declaration—"

Butler: "Let me read it. Umm. Ahem. On the first month of winter, on the Fourth moon, we will adjourn to battle on the Northern Fields, it says."

Lone Winter King: "Hmph. That's a very succinct message."

The Hero: "Ten days."

Butler: "If we don't go..."

The Hero: "What will happen?"

Seneschal: "If we're speaking about this war, whether or not we take note of their Declaration, the Central Continental Armies will continue marching onwards.

If we look further ahead, this will become a siege. — Starting from our Kingdom, the Southern United Kingdoms has built lots of fortresses in preparation for the Demon Invasion. But, to the North of our territory, in the direction of the Central Continent... In other words, in the direction from which the Central Continental Army will invade us this time, apart from a few sentry towers and minor fortifications, we don't have any fortresses which can stand up to them for any extended period of time. They will invade our Capital Cities and demolish us there."

Lone Winter King: "Well. It looks like we don't have any choice but to accept their Declaration."

The Hero: "Ugh, I don't want to fight— I don't want to fight!"

Lone Winter King: "This is a war between us foolish humans."

The Hero: "No. This— These are seeds which I planted."

Lone Winter King: "No. 'Recognising the Freedom of the Serfs' is a decision that was made by Humanity. It is a war for Humanity. There is no need for you to shoulder this responsibility, Hero."

Seneschal: "That's right, Hero!"

Butler: "Even at this point, we are very grateful to you, I'm sure you consider us to be an annoyance."

The Hero: "No... That's not true."

Butler: "Hero..."

The Hero: "I didn't say it correctly, but that's wrong. Such a thing is not what you're aiming for. This could really be the end."

Seneschal: "..."

Lone Winter King: "It's true that whittling away either of our military power here is of no advantage to us at all.

This does nothing to increase either of our International Powers either. Why does the Central Continent not understand this?"

The Hero: (Those who wish for war are dictators. In this limited world, there are those who wish not for Prosperity, but for Influence and the creation of their private Oligopoly... That cannot be denied.)

The Hero: (What will you do? How will you stop them? Assassination, Your Majesty? ...Don't be stupid, Hero! That's the same as when I went to the Demon King's Castle. At the very least, if I had half a year... No, just three months...)

The Hero: (At the very least, just a while longer...)

The Hero: (This price hike thing is probably the work of that Merchant. Only that guy would do something like this. It must be him... It has to be. It probably isn't just him but he definitely has some kind of pivotal role in this... Why? Why is the price of wheat going up? Ahhh—! I don't understand! Why is the Demon King missing at a time like this! If she was here, she would have solved this issue in a heartbeat!"

Really? But you're the Hero!

The Hero: "Why am I remembering this at such a time..."

Have you ever thought, 'There's something beyond that hill yonder' or 'What will there be at the place where this ship is sailing?' That happy, expectant feeling?

The Hero: (Why is it that at moments of life-and-death like this, I always recall the first time I pointed my sword at her, and she pointed those sparkling eyes at me?)

That's why I want to see it.

The Hero: (So defenceless)

But precisely because of this, if we can welcome this 'Alternate Future,' not just for me but for the Three Thousand Worlds, this will be another thing that has never been seen before.



International Influence: This refers to the various elements of power which a country controls. This is not just limited to military power but also extends to economic, governmental, diplomatic, scientific, technological and even cultural influence.

Oligopoly: This refers to a state of Economic Competition within a market. In this structure, the entire market is controlled by a few individual firms or people (typically 2-3), but can also refer to a political state where the country is controlled by these few people.

The Hero: “—”

Seneschal: “Hero.”

The Hero: “Your Majesty, if we do go to war, how can we fight in such a way as to avoid as much loss as possible?”

Lone Winter King: “What the enemy intends is something that has been done many times. In these sorts of battles, two armies meet at a predetermined time on this wide, open field. The strategy will likely consist of... large swathes of knights charging at each other head-on. If tactics, numbers and equipment are not vastly different on both sides, such a battle will likely go on 1-2 times a day.”

The Hero: “A knight’s battle, then.”

Lone Winter King: “Of course that won’t be all. In order to fully develop the true force capability of the Knights, extensive preparation will be required. Alongside the Knights will be foot-soldiers and squires.

Unless some accident which causes the entire battle to completely dissolve occurs, such as the Commander getting captured, this could potentially go on for days. Both sides will suffer severe losses and the loser will be the one who capitulates.”

The Hero: “I don’t want us to make these sacrifices, whether it’s the Armies of the Southern United Kingdoms or the Central Continent.”

Lone Winter King: “...”

The Hero: “It’s not a sweet thought. But it’s something I consider essential.”

Lone Winter King: “...”

Seneschal: “Your Majesty...”

Lone Winter King: “It depends on the weather.”

The Hero: “Snow, then—”

Lone Winter King: “That’s right. It’s piled up quite high over here, but in the Northern Plains it hasn’t yet begun to snow. If those plains become snow-covered first — if snow falls, the war plans will fall too. The battle will have to be postponed as well.

In these ten days, if no snow falls and the good weather continues, there will be nothing in the way of this pitched battle.

On the contrary, if snow really begins to fall, amidst the falling snow, we may yet be able to find a way to avoid this battle.”

The Hero: “Yeah.”

Lone Winter King: “At worst, four weeks. At best, if we hold out for two weeks, snow will fall. That’s how long we need to endure for.”

The Hero: “Can we do it?”

Lone Winter King: "...I'll take it up. I will not lose this Winter War. I stake my name on it."



Predetermined Time: In wars during the Middle Ages, the scouting ability and communications of an army were very low. As a result, they were often unable to locate the enemy and would spend a long time searching for each other. Even if they did know where the other was, this information tended to be old, and it was often that when Armies marched to where the enemy was meant to be, they would be long gone. As a result, instead of fighting, both sides would often

retreat endlessly while expending large amounts of grain and other resources. In order to prevent this, it was often necessary for enemies to arrange the battle at a predetermined time and place.

Snow: Snow does not necessarily completely impede the movements of an army. However, the cold will reduce the speed of movement of soldiers and also decrease morale. If equipment and preparations for the cold are inadequate, sicknesses like frostbite or hypothermia may also decrease the number of battle ready soldiers. Furthermore, sending of supplies is difficult when roads are blocked by snow, and there may be the danger of supplies being cut off from the front.

Winter War: A war being waged in the winter requires a very specific set of combat abilities. Instead of foot soldiers, ski soldiers may be deployed and also used for transport. Since soldiers are fighting in heavy winter gear, with the strong winds causing swirls of snow which may block their line of sight, much of such wars fought hand-to-hand at close quarters.

As a result, there will be a massive difference in combat ability between troops trained to fight in winter and troops which are not. Even in Japan, the Japan Self-Defence Force has specialised divisions trained for Winter Warfare.

Volume 2 Chapter 2, “What has Appeared will Definitely not Disappear!”

----- The Courtyard of Memories, the Mind of the Demon King

The Demon King: “Hahh.”

The Chief Maid: “What are you doing, Your Majesty?”

The Demon King: “Mmm.”

The Chief Maid: “You look sluggish.”

The Demon King: “I’m just a bit tired.”

The Chief Maid: “My, my, even though you became the Demon King, you haven’t changed a bit.”

The Demon King: “Would you have wanted me to?”

The Chief Maid: “Hehehe. That’s true. It’s great that you didn’t change.”

The Demon King: “It’s my first time doing so much exercise. I’ve done enough exercise for a lifetime, now I’ll just indulge in research until the Hero comes.”

The Chief Maid: “All that’s changed is your title, Your Majesty.”

The Demon King: “That—”

The Chief Maid: “Yes?”

The Demon King: “I don’t like this ‘Demon King’ thing.”

The Chief Maid: “Really? But you’ve become the Demon King, haven’t you?”

The Demon King: “It makes me feel jittery. Can we do something about it?”

The Chief Maid: “In any case, you’ve already been stripped of your name. We can’t go around calling you by your old name, can we? In that case, how about ‘She Who Has Far Too Large Breasts and Too Much Flab?’”

The Demon King: "Sometimes I get the feeling that you hate me. I'd gravitate towards saying more than sometimes, actually."

The Chief Maid: "That's troublesome."

The Demon King: "In any case, can't you be nicer?"

The Chief Maid: "Is that so? Well, even if you asked me to....."

The Demon King: "Can you?"

The Chief Maid: "There are no blind spots with the Way of the Maid."

The Demon King: "Ooooh!"

The Chief Maid: "Ahem — Demon King ♪"

The Demon King: "Wh-What?! I just saw flowers erupt in the background behind you!"

The Chief Maid: "It's part of Maid Magic."

The Demon King: "That may be so, but it's quite off-putting."

The Chief Maid: "Demon King. Why do you say such things when I continuously express my adoration for you?"

The Demon King: "Ohhhhh. Why are you saying such saccharine things?!"

The Chief Maid: "It's the key to the whole technique." *Beams.*

The Demon King: "Ohhh! I've got to hurry up."

The Chief Maid: "That may be so, but—"

The Demon King: "What?"

The Chief Maid: "Is it really alright to be cooped up all the time in the library like that?"

The Demon King: "If it's about running the country, I can manage it from in here."

The Chief Maid: "It's not that I don't understand, but—"

The Demon King: "The Demon World doesn't have this much research material or databases. It doesn't have printers or general-purpose computers. It's a primitive world."

The Chief Maid: "Just the opposite. It's a very special place."

The Demon King: "That's definitely true. Alright then."

The Chief Maid: "What will you do?"

The Demon King: "A few things, I guess. If we don't support it up, at this rate, the entire political system is not going to be able to sustain itself. I've got to make a plan for it."

The Chief Maid: "Mmm."

The Demon King: "The Demon World is in an eternal state of chaos with conflicts between the different tribes and races. We have to accept the fact that much of this is the fault of the Five Royal Races, but looking at this in reverse, that they were even able to become prosperous amidst all this fighting is also undeniable. Since all this conflict has helped accelerate the Monetary Economy and the flow of goods and services, I suppose we can't entirely criticise them."

The Chief Maid: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "This is it for the time being!"

The Chief Maid: "This is made from paper? It's quite rough."

The Demon King: "It's not paper made in the Library, it's paper made in the Demon World. I commanded the Sylvan Race to make it."

The Chief Maid: "Right, and then what?"

The Demon King: "I'd like to make a record of the conflict. We'll start with victories and defeats, dates, numbers on both sides, losses and gains, materiel and preparations, even expenditure and participating generals."

The Chief Maid: "I don't understand."

The Demon King: "I have a few objectives. One is to get used to making consistent records, and maybe even to professionalise this process. From a long-term perspective, we can probably even raise the Literacy Rate among the population. Another reason is also for me to understand the things which I am doing."

The Chief Maid: "Understand?"

The Demon King: "I don't like to support the idea of war, but it's troublesome to mix personal feelings and grudges with what's really important. I'd like to make sure I can reflect on and keep track of the values I ascribe to the various objectives as things go on."

The Chief Maid: "That sounds very troublesome."

The Demon King: "Until the Hero comes, we don't have that time, so we have to rush it."

The Chief Maid: "The Hero..."

The Demon King: "Have you seen it? I have a new picture of him."

The Chief Maid: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "It seems he can even stand now, doesn't it? Isn't he adorable? Isn't he wonderful? Yeahhh, I can almost hear his voice."

The Chief Maid: "You want to meet him way too much."

The Demon King: "I do want to meet him. But until the seal on the gate is lifted, all I can do is endure. Look, he's just fallen asleep in this photo, hasn't he?"

The Chief Maid: "He's just like a puppy."

The Demon King: "Yeah! Isn't that wonderful?"

The Chief Maid: "Ahh, you're all mesmerised. It's like you're blind. You could easily lift the seal and go off on your own."

The Demon King: "I sealed it myself. You've got to draw the line."

The Chief Maid: "You're very cute, Your Majesty."

The Demon King: "Don't be stupid. I'm not cute at all. The Hero and I are the only two Living Singularities in this world. When the Hero appears, something will change. Concepts will run into concepts, they will combine and some sort of reaction will occur."

The Chief Maid: "That'll probably result in a war."

The Demon King: "It'll result in a new point of view."

The Chief Maid: "Yeah..."

The Demon King: "I've got a big head, I stay in all day, just what have I wasted my long life doing? But when we do get to meet, at that fateful moment where we exchange words, I'm certain that I will feel something wonderful."

The Chief Maid: "...How romantic."

The Demon King: "I don't mean that it would feel romantic. This is purely an economic, market undertaking."

Buzz, buzz, buzz.

The Chief Maid: "So it's that sort of thing, then... Oh."

The Demon King: "What's up?"

The Chief Maid: "I've got a call. Please excuse me."

The Demon King: "Your subordinates are increasing, Chief Maid. That's a great thing."

The Chief Maid: "—?"

The Demon King: "It wouldn't be strange if Enlightenment Philosophy came sooner rather than later. Even though there's a lot of room for development... It's NDC 130, right? We've got to expand civilisation in time for the Hero's arrival."

Just like the wide open sea, there's an immense number of things which have to be done."



Literacy Rate: This refers to the percentage of the population who are able to read and write.

The Chief Maid: "—?!—!"

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty!"

The Demon King: "What?"

The Chief Maid: "The seal on the gate, it's been dispelled!"

The Demon King: "Huh?"

The Chief Maid: "They used some sort of Massive Ceremonial Magic and dispelled the seal."

The Demon King: "What?! I haven't even exchanged words with the Hero! It's way too early! Who dispelled the seal?! I didn't think there would be anybody familiar with such high levels of Neutralisation Magic in the Demon World—"

The Chief Maid: "No, the Humans did it. It's from the Human World. Upon dispelling the gate, 1500 soldiers have begun pouring in to invade. —

They call themselves the First Crusade. Their goal is to bring the Demon World to its knees.”

The Demon King: “How opportunistic of them. And rash.”

The Chief Maid: “Huh.”

The Demon King: “We should head back to the Demon King Castle.”

The Chief Maid: “Of course.”

The Demon King: “Why... Why have the Humans come?! — Wasn’t the birth of the Hero supposed to restore balance to the world? What intentions do the Humans have in coming here anyway?”

----- The Northern Fields, on a Hill where Snow is Collecting

Obese Nobleman: “Ohh, it’s cold. Why is it so cold!”

Steward: “Indeed.”

Obese Nobleman: “What are you doing, light some more firewood!”

Peasant: “Yes!”

Obese Nobleman: “Is it time for dinner yet? A camping trip like this with tents really needs at least some good food.”

Steward: “I understand. Allow me to go and do something about it. Please wait a moment.”

Obese Nobleman: “Ohh, it’s cold.” *Shivers.*

Trudging through the snow.

Imperial Guard: “Excuse me.”

Obese Nobleman: “How is it?”

Imperial Guard: "Our knights and soldiers have been assembled. For this battle, we have assembled a total of 650 men."

Obese Nobleman: "Hmm, that's a lot less than I'd hoped for. Well. It's fine. With the mercenaries, I believe we've got at least 1,000."

Imperial Guard: "Yes!"

Obese Nobleman: "What about the other camps?"

Imperial Guard: "The Grey King has the Imperial Guards Division and the Axe Knights. The Heavy Cataphracts from the Kingdom of the Mountain and the Mounted Archers from the Kingdom of Branches are already assembled, but on the whole, we're still assembling the full army."

Obese Nobleman: "How long will it take?" *Shivers.*

Imperial Guard: "Yes. It should be another 2-3 days..."

Obese Nobleman: "Today's the deadline for the muster, isn't it? What are they doing! Fools! Do they not want to win?"

Imperial Guard: "What shall we do about the knights and soldiers?"

Obese Nobleman: "With this tent as the centre, arrange the base in a horseshoe formation. Well, well, at this rate, we're going to need some time before we're ready for a battle."

Imperial Guard: "I apologise."

Obese Nobleman: "It's fine. It's the fault of all the other lazy noblemen. And the enemy? What of those pigs from the South?"

Imperial Guard: "The armies of the enemy total 2,500 strong. They've assembled in formation at the edge of the forest."

Obese Nobleman: "Ugh. They're living like rats at the border of the world. It can't be helped. After all, they're scared to engage us in the centre of the Plains."

Trudging through the snow.

Mercenary Captain: "Is my Lord here?"

Obese Nobleman: "Yes. Captain? How are the numbers?"

Mercenary Captain: "As stated, I've managed to assemble 400 Veterans."

Obese Nobleman: "Excellent! So, we've got more than 1,000. We've definitely got the advantage."

Imperial Guard: "Indeed."

Mercenary Captain: "I hope you'd better not forget about the compensation."

Obese Nobleman: "Of course, we have the gold ready. You can expect something even better after this is all over."

Mercenary Captain: "Well, that's all good, but there's one more promise we hope you will keep."

Obese Nobleman: "Of course I remember. In the dawn of entering the Kingdom of Winter, you have free reign to pillage the first few villages we encounter."

Mercenary Captain: "Good. That's all I wanted to hear. My archers are with you. Give us a shout if you need us."

Steward trudges through the snow.

Steward: "My Lord. Dinner has been prepared. If it is fine with you, I will serve it now."

Obese Nobleman: "Good."

Steward: "Also, the nearby villages have sent over some plum wine. It is some exquisitely top-grade ice wine, and they've even sent 20 bottles of it."

Mercenary Captain: "Hahaha. Peasants. They're so scared their lands will be lain waste to... Well, they will be, though."

Obese Nobleman: "My, my! At least these people know how to be civil. Hehehe. Oh, Captain. Have you had dinner yet?"

Mercenary Captain: "No."

Obese Nobleman: "The battle will commence in two to three days. Since you won't have time for things like dinner then, how about we eat now? Oh, that's right. Allow me to send your mercenaries a bottle of wine."

Mercenary Captain: "Thank you for that. It'll really warm them up in this cold."

Obese Nobleman: "Hahahahaha! I wouldn't exactly call this palace food, but tonight, let us feast in anticipation of our great victory. Hahahahaha!"

— The Kingdom of the Lake, Capitol, the Headquarters of the Union

Abacus clicking.

It's gone up by three points. Continue to buy. Indicators are strong!!!

A ship from the Kingdom of Copper has arrived with a large shipment of copper!!!

Acquire it. Even at a higher price!

Young Merchant: "...Is it your first time seeing something like this?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Yeah." *Peers around interestedly.*

Young Merchant: "Well, we have a contract for information transfer."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Such a thing has to be fair."

Young Merchant: "Is this place alright? I'm very busy, but I'm sure I can arrange a convoy for you. You could even tour the city. You'll be giving me plenty of information about the Demon World, so don't hold back."

Fire Dragon Lady: "No, it's quite alright."



Veteran: Veterans are highly experienced soldiers who have likely fought in many wars. Before medical technology was sufficiently developed, soldiers who sustained injuries were often incapable of recovery, and would usually either retire or die. As a result, the number of veterans in an army was far less than it is today.

Young Merchant: “Huh.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “So this is where you work, then? Is that big map hanging on the wall a map of the Human World?”

Young Merchant: “Yes it is.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “In that case, allow me one day to stay here and scrutinise the streets. I won’t get in the way. I won’t raise my voice. I want to get to understand what a normal person on the street lives like, and I think this is one of the centres of this world. — Is it not?”

Young Merchant: “...”

Fire Dragon Lady: “I’m a visitor from a foreign land so I might seem a bit foolish.”

Young Merchant: “Well, this is a transaction as well.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “Yes, it’s fair.”

Young Merchant: “As long as you don’t do things like sneaking back in at dawn.”

Fire Dragon Lady: "Of course I won't! I know for sure that you're a great gentleman, but I can't be sure out there. What would happen if I'd gotten deflowered or something! That would be extremely unpleasant."

Young Merchant: "I'm sure you wouldn't be such a terrible victim."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Stop saying things like that!"

Young Merchant: "You're really noisy."

Door opens.

Aide: "Councillor. Tonight's movements." *Hands over report.*

Young Merchant: "Understood, I'll look at it. — How are the purchases from the Kingdom of Branches?"

Aide: "Proceeding as planned! The market price of wheat has increased by 160% since yesterday."

Young Merchant: "...It's slowed down."

Door closes.

Shrewd Accountant: "The expeditionary forces are currently being assembled. It seems they left late."

Young Merchant: "Late?"

Shrewd Accountant: "Morale was low and it appears military order has dissolved into chaos."

Young Merchant: "How interesting... Was this a strategy of the Lone Winter King?"

Shrewd Accountant: "It would seem that way."

Young Merchant: "Why?"

Shrewd Accountant: "This is just a rumour, but it seems that the merchants in the Kingdom of Winter have been selling a lot of Ice Wine to the soldiers."

Knock knock knock. Door opens!

Aide: "Councillor! It's an emergency!"

Young Merchant: "Report."

Aide: "With backing from the Church, the Holy Empire has decided to carry out Reminting on the gold currency! It hasn't been confirmed yet but it seems that 28 gold coins today will be worth 15 of the new gold coins. According to law, the present gold coins will be forbidden from use or storage. I have information that even the new gold coins will be reminted if the exchange rate falls below a certain margin. They are indeed desperate..."



Reminting of Coins: This refers to the process of melting down and making new coins. For example, 2 coins which each contain 3 grams of gold can be remade into a new gold coin which contains 4.5 grams of gold. This new coin would now be worth 2 of the old gold coins. 15,000 old gold coins can then be made into 10,000 new gold coins, but the new gold coins would be worth 20,000 old gold coins, resulting in a surplus of 5,000 old gold coins for the state coffers.

However, since there will be 1.5g less gold, there may be even less confidence in the value of money, and hence, unbelievable inflation could result.

Young Merchant: "What a sensible move. I understand they have to stand up to this. But... how? The new gold coins will have 2.8 times the value of the old ones, but can they maintain this value? Will the Church do it? The Emperor?"

Do they even understand the situation their country is in? If they do, do they love it? Harvesting wheat from the great earth, quarrying charcoal from the cliffs, burning that charcoal to forge iron, to bake bread, to raise a family. To what extent do they understand this?

I may be a proud merchant, but maybe because of this pride, I will never forget about these. If I do forget, I would find everything I've fought for has burnt to ashes. Now more than ever. "Profit motive is a vocabulary we both have in common." — I see now that 'Everybody wants to be happy.' They need to understand that everyone has the right to fight for their happiness."

Young Merchant: "But on the other hand, if we allow everyone to gain their happiness, this will be the Union's loss."

Shrewd Accountant: "What's happening?"

Young Merchant: "I fear the war will draw to a stalemate."

Shrewd Accountant: "Yes."

Young Merchant: "The Wheat Futures... They're too early. We need to stockpile some of the goods. When you sell goods which you don't have on your hands, it's not like one would expect. This is the same as buying and selling trust."

Shrewd Accountant: "..."

Young Merchant: "Do they have the power to live up to this trust? Or will this be a misunderstanding between colleagues? Kings and noblemen, landlords and clergymen. These are people whom one needs to trust. The entire basis of this trust is the land. One requires trust that the goods one wants will be produced, trust that those goods will definitely be handed over. Trust that the shipment will not be frozen. In the end, one must trust the earth to produce what is needed. One can be robbed of trust, but one cannot easily gain it. To so antagonise the farmers like this is not the way of being a merchant."

Young Merchant: "Yes. We have ethics as merchants as well."

Shrewd Accountant: "Yes."

Young Merchant: "Lady. Let us go to the Kingdom of Winter."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Let's."

----- Letter from the Disciple Nobleman to the Queen of Ice and Snow

My Most Magnificent and Beloved Royal Majesty,

Time has flowed significantly since the day I left our Kingdom. While the Central Continent is still enjoying the last wisps of autumn, the caravans plying the trade routes are few and the expressions of the people are sad and listless.

Beginning with wheat, the prices of goods have experienced hyperinflation. The expressions of the noblemen, landlords and royalty whom I have met come in three forms: complete glee that the war is going on; steadfast opposition and adherence to peace; and concern for the people of the Kingdom of Winter.

That being said, this certainly is the Central Continent. Having inserted myself into the social world, I've become deeply enchanted by the currently fashionable dress of plunging necklines. Since I've come here, I've also begun to learn to play the lute, I am truly enjoying my time here.

I am not encouraging Your Majesty to spend the wealth of the Kingdom on entertainment, but how would Your Majesty feel about me sending you some things? I have just sent one long dress and two purses. I believe the colour suits Your Majesty very well.

Post-Script: If possible, I would greatly appreciate some more funds.

Post-Post-Script: The Queen of the Lake would like a 60% reduction of tariffs. In her words, "A secret economic union would be great too."

The other 5 Kingdoms are also extremely worried about tiding over this year's famine, so I believe an appropriate response should be drafted to deal with them taking advantage of the Kingdom of Ice. I have also arranged for a shipment of charcoal and furs from the Kingdom of the Lake. Have they arrived?

----- The Kingdom of White Night, the Palace of White Night

One-Eyed Commander: "Why! Why haven't they defeated those peasants! Those who oppose the Empire! Who oppose the will of the Spirit!"

Slams table.

One-Eyed Commander: "Why are they still alive?! Why does the light still shine on them?! Aren't they traitors? We tipped off the Church, sent an Inquisition after them and yet, why do they still exist on this Earth?!"

King of White Night: "Hehehehe. Hahahaha!"

One-Eyed Commander: "What's so funny!"

King of White Night: "They're a real nuisance so it's not that easy to get rid of them! There's no point telling a bunch of pigs, 'Noblemen are all pigs!' Hmph. Even if you kill them, all of this won't be over."

One-Eyed Commander: "How impertinent!"

King of White Night: "But it's the truth."

One-Eyed Commander: "Hahahaha. You've got other problems too, don't you?
King of White Night..."

King of White Night: "The price of wheat has continued to soar. The monetary aid from the Central Continent has also increased substantially from last year. Probably because that was the sum earmarked for all four Kingdoms. It's almost twice as large as it was before... But even so, the amount of wheat we can buy with this money is still less than last year."

One-Eyed Commander: “And... What of the emigrants?”

King of White Night: “Regardless of day or night, serfs have been crossing the border into the Kingdom of Metal. What’s so good about the Tripartite!? They’re just fooling those serfs into facing new problems on the other side of the border. Why do they think the Lone Winter King is their friend?”

One-Eyed Commander: “Haha, that guy can cheat even the Heavens.”

King of White Night: “—!”

One-Eyed Commander: “Gahahahahaha!”

King of White Night: “At this rate, our Kingdom... Just our Kingdom of White Night...”

One-Eyed Commander: “Hey, Your Majesty.”

King of White Night: “...” Nods.

One-Eyed Commander: “Why don’t you just seize it? Here, look. The Kingdom of the Iron Fist King. The Kingdom of the Queen of Ice and Snow. They’re like fruits ripe for the picking. After all, they are traitors. Sooner or later, their corruption and rottenness will spread to the rest of the Human World. If that’s the case, then you should quickly seize them and consume them, as a favour to Humanity.”

King of White Night: “...Can I?”

One-Eyed Commander: “The Central Continent has mustered troops from throughout the lands for this war. These troops will be proud but ultimately lack experience. And what of our Kingdom? We have the world’s most experienced soldiers, don’t we?”

King of White Night: “But I lost most of my best men at the Isle of Light. Even if we went through another year of training, we still wouldn’t be able to match up to the quality of troops the rest of the Southern United Kingdoms are able to field...”

One-Eyed Commander: "Hahahaha! The Central Continent! You! Even the Lone Winter King all underestimate this!"

King of White Night: "What?"

One-Eyed Commander: "The advantage of a standing army."

King of White Night: "And what's that?"

One-Eyed Commander: "A Surprise Attack." *Grins.*

King of White Night: "Isn't that the same as banditry! How can we do such a thing in a war between humans?! If the Church gets wind of this, our Kingdom will be in trouble."



Surprise Attack: An attack which is conducted when the enemy has not yet had time to prepare. Especially in a world like this where battles tend to be arranged, an attack which takes place without an arranged place or an arranged time could strike the enemy unaware and give the attacker a large advantage.

One-Eyed Commander: "But these are enemies of the Holy Church, they're no better than beasts. If we're lucky, they'll be so preoccupied with dealing with the gathering threat of the armies led by the Holy Church to the North that they'll barely have fortifications along their border with us!"

King of White Night: "!"

One-Eyed Commander: “Bandits? Fine! We’ll pay the bandits along their other border to lay waste to the Kingdom of Metal.

Once they let their guard down, we’ll launch a massive surprise attack with knights at the centre. We’ll burn their homes and fields and destroy the Kingdom of Metal in a heartbeat.”

King of White Night: “Hehehe, that sounds like a plan.”

One-Eyed Commander: “With the inky darkness behind this one eye, let’s destroy the Kingdom of Metal.”

----- The Palace of Winter, a Large Room, Strategy Committee

Lone Winter King: “Then let’s adopt a defensive formation.”

The Female Paladin: “If possible, we should focus not on our mounted knights but on our foot infantry. Especially the spear infantry. We’ll also need a lot of combat engineers.”

Seneschal: “And winter gear as well.”

The Female Paladin: “Has it been prepared?”

Seneschal: “We already acquired large quantities of them from the Central Continent for the Conquest of the Isle of Light.”

The Female Paladin: “Make sure they’re ready as soon as possible.”

The Hero: “I’m sorry, you had to be a babysitter just now and a general right after.”

The Female Paladin: “No, it’s fine. The sisters have been safely escorted to the Kingdom of Metal. With the situation as it is, rather than the Kingdom of Winter so close to the battlefield, the Kingdom of Metal is far further and safer.”

Butler: “Hmm... When I have the time I will check up on them.”

Seneschal: "You just want to see boobies, don't you?"

Butler: "Nyohohoho! Excuse me!"

Lone Winter King: "Please have limits."

The Female Paladin: "Please leave this to me, Hero. As much as possible, I don't want anyone to get hurt."

The Hero: "But your sword is a very dangerous thing."

The Female Paladin: "What are you saying? Isn't it good that swords and warhorses are dangerous things?"

The Hero: "Don't be ridiculous."

The Female Paladin: "Of course! If it's possible to do things without anybody getting hurt, then that's the way we should be doing things!"

Butler: "..."

Lone Winter King: "Seneschal. Help the Female Paladin gather up all the necessary funds and function as the rear guard. Ensure the smooth flow of supplies to the front."

Seneschal: "Yes."

The Female Paladin: "I fear the Central Continental Expeditionary Force may contain up to 20,000 soldiers."

Butler: "With the exception of the Crusades, such a force is completely unprecedented."

Lone Winter King: "We have maybe 4,500."

The Hero: "..."

Lone Winter King: "Don't make that face. No matter what, with the Hero and the Female Paladin commanding, what do we have to worry about?"

The Female Paladin: "Leave it to me!"

Running footsteps! Door flies open!

Messenger: "I have a report!"

Butler: "What is it?"

Lone Winter King: "Speak."

Messenger: "A message from the Southern Artic Ocean! D-d-demons!"

The Hero: "!"

The Female Paladin: "!"

Butler: "!"

Lone Winter King: "How many?!"

Messenger: "Unknown. Information is still being gathered. Estimates place the number at at least 1,500."

The Hero: "What timing!"

The Female Paladin: (A Demon attack... What is the Demon King doing?!)

The Hero: "I'll go... What's going on? What is going on?!"

Butler: "Hero..."

Lone Winter King: "As long as we have the Hero... Even 10,000 enemies are nothing... I'm sorry, even anything more than that is nothing..."

The Hero: "Your Majesty."

Lone Winter King: "?"

The Hero: "Would you be shocked if I said that I would rather avoid a fight with the Demons?"

Lone Winter King: "..."

Seneschal: "Th-that's..."

Lone Winter King: "No matter what, we should avoid a war on two fronts."

The Hero: "..."

Butler: "Young Man..."

Lone Winter King: "That's all I can say for now."

The Hero: "Then I suppose I should thank you."

The Female Paladin: "Hero... Are you okay?"

The Hero: "Of course."

Bang!

The Female Paladin: "..."

Butler: "What's going on?"

Lone Winter King: "..."

Clank!

Messenger: "I have a message!"

Lone Winter King: "What! If it's about the Demons attacking, we've already heard the first report."

Messenger: "It isn't. A rider has arrived! The Kingdom of Metal is under attack from a 2,000 strong army from the Kingdom of White Night! This happened a day ago."

----- The Kingdom of Winter, Palace, the Finance Ministry

Assemble the messengers! Send a fast rider to the border!!! Do a survey of our granary!

Many people running about!

Young Merchant: "It's gotten very busy around here."

Disciple Merchant: "There's a tremendous killing intent about. I'm sorry about the rowdiness."

Fire Dragon Lady: "..."

Young Merchant: "No, no, we came precisely because of the situation. I'm sorry for imposing ourselves on you without at least writing a letter to inform you of our coming."

Disciple Merchant: "No, I was waiting for you."

Young Merchant: "Oh."

Disciple Merchant: "I would like to confirm this, but..."

Young Merchant: "Yes."

Disciple Merchant: "The one who has been playing games on this tabletop – that's you, right?"

Young Merchant: "Why do you think so?"

Disciple Merchant: "Otherwise, why would you come and visit me?"

Young Merchant: "I'm probably just a puppet being controlled from behind by the real player."

Disciple Merchant: "Controlling these things from a long distance? That's a very wasteful practice. In these situations, unless you have discretionary power, one wouldn't have the ability to control the situation. But if someone entrusted you with these discretionary powers in situations and the ability to make decisions based on one's instincts, you're not just a marionette but a player."

Young Merchant: "Hehehe."

Disciple Merchant: "If it were me, I can see why one would do it."

Young Merchant: "I understand. Then I suppose the one who introduced tariffs was you?"

Disciple Merchant: "It was."

Assistant: "Sir!"

Young Merchant: "Bring us some tea, please."

Assistant: "Yes!"

Young Merchant: "What a cute young man."

Disciple Merchant: "It wears off."

Young Merchant: "Shall we begin negotiations then?"

Disciple Merchant: "..."

Young Merchant: "We've digressed greatly from my original topic of discussion. Allow me to summarise the main points. Firstly: I would like a writ which gives me free access through the lands of the Tripartite Union. With present tariffs, it is prohibitively difficult to do business when we transit through the Southern United Kingdoms. The Union would like special privileges to be given to us."

Disciple Merchant: "Special privileges?"

Young Merchant: "On the condition that we do not conduct trade in the Tripartite Union. We merely want to be allowed free passage for goods which we bring in. That should not have significant economic impacts on the barriers to trade you have created, should it?"

Disciple Merchant: "That's... true."

Young Merchant: "Secondly: we would like to loan the Isle of Light."

Disciple Merchant: "Huh?"

Young Merchant: "Geographically, the Isle of Light belongs to the Kingdom of Winter. We would like you to loan it to us as a demesne or even a vassal territory.

Of course, we will not take control of it directly, but rather through a third party. We hope you understand the benefit to both of us in operating through a proxy."

Disciple Merchant: "Well, who will it be, and where from?"

Young Merchant: "Thirdly: Do you know that the Union operates an internal bank?"

Disciple Merchant: "I do. The power available to this bank for international transfer of funds is a massive weapon of the Union."

Young Merchant: "We would like to request the permission to establish branches of the bank in Chambers of Commerce in each of the Capital Cities of the Tripartite Union."

Disciple Merchant: "That is something I can understand easier."

Young Merchant: "Fourthly: The Union would like to purchase the entire stockpile of the Tripartite Union's potatoes."

Disciple Merchant: "...Huh?"

Young Merchant: "These are the topics of discussion for today. I would like to specially mention, though I'm sure you can't tell just by looking, that the Union presently barely has any money left. We would like to request that the above transactions do not involve the exchange of gold."

Disciple Merchant: "..."

Door opens.

Assistant: "I have the tea!"

Disciple Merchant: "Just leave it there."

Assistant: "Yes!"

Disciple Merchant: "..." *Gulp.*

Young Merchant: "How warm. Did you add jam into it?"

Disciple Merchant: "Yes, we do that in the cold South."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Thank you."

Assistant: "Ehehehe."

Disciple Merchant: (I wonder what sort of face is hiding behind that hood. I'm certain she's a beauty.)

Assistant: "Ah. I've brought sweets as well!"

Young Merchant: "What a relaxed office."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Indeed."

Disciple Merchant: (What does this mean... Let me think. What is his intention behind this string of proposals?)

Firstly, with regards to the Bank. Based on what he says, the Bank will be open to... well, at the very least, it'll be open to the Guilds and to the state. What's the meaning of this? Is it just to tap on the potential of our rapidly growing Kingdom...? But, if they were to open this up to the public... While they may benefit on our end, wouldn't the standing of the Union with the Central Continent and Church rapidly deteriorate?)

Disciple Merchant: (No, that's right, the order is important. In other words, this is number three. What about the rest...)

Disciple Merchant: (Alright, let's think about this in order. The first is the Writ of Free Passage. That's easy. In the first place, the tariff was meant to prevent exports and not imports. If that's all they wanted, then just as the Merchant says, it shouldn't have significant impacts on our country... But, why am I apprehensive about this...)

Next, the second proposal. It's extremely unsettling when one does not know what the opponent is aiming for. If it does not cause problems for the fisheries or the shipping lines, then there is certainly room for negotiation.

But, who? And why? What will happen on that island? Salt? What meaning could renting the Isle possibly have?

Assuming we're done with the third proposal, how about the fourth? If we look at it in order, it may appear that the fourth proposal is some sort of reward, but the meaning is still unclear. To begin with, how does the Merchant intend to store such large amounts of potatoes from the Three Kingdoms? This is not an amount one can so brashly purchase. We may be small countries, but these are national stockpiles. To begin with, the potato is not a food crop which can easily be sold to many countries. The Tripartite Union, and maybe even the Kingdom of the Lake, where the Order of the Lake comes from and the neighbouring country of the Kingdom of Branches. Within these areas, it should probably be able to sell, but considering the unnatural buying patterns recently... To begin with, this is way too much to be selling to just two countries. Who could this food be intended for?)

Disciple Merchant: (Meaning... Who... Where... Where...? That's right. It's all the same. If this passes through our lands, where could it be intended for? To get to the Kingdom of White Night, or to other Kingdoms, there's no need to pass through our territories. Could it possibly be cheaper to transit the goods through our shipping lanes? No, unless there's been some new discoveries, such a shipping lane doesn't exist. The tariffs are completely inapplicable between Kingdoms of the Economic Union, since it only applies to countries apart from the three signatories.

They have no money and that's probably because of the ridiculous amount of money they would have poured out just to play with the prices to such an extent. It's not impossible; to do something to such an extent. The price inflation in the Central Continent was a ridiculous situation. The misery of the people... Part of the noblemen are coming up with financial assistance, social securities and public infrastructure works in order to spread some income to the people but with the entire monetary system and trade network so tied up, it's like trying to cool a hot stone with a drop of water. No matter how much money they spread around, it's still limited by leakages to the other countries and personal influence. It's like using a tub of iced water to cool a spoon of hot soup.)

Disciple Merchant: (According to Teacher, these sorts of financial intervention and Fiscal Policy, is extremely effective in such situations.

But this time, the situation is a bit too serious. Unless all the noblemen were to act simultaneously... Fiscal Policy. Bank...? Monetary? Monetary... policy? To render Monetary Policy useless, that's why he's fixed the market prices? Since the entire Central Continent only uses one currency, it is possible to completely fix all market prices. In that case, Fiscal Policy should definitely work...)

Door closes!!!

Disciple Merchant: "You! The wheat doesn't matter to you at all! You just want to use it as barter!"

Young Merchant: "Heh."

Disciple Merchant: "And you intend to invest that wheat in the Tripartite Union?!"



Fiscal Policy: This refers to both the encouragement of the movement of financial capital, and the decision of the amount and the incidence of tax rates. If done properly, it can help to stabilise taxes and create the proper environment for a blossoming economy. If it fails, it may result in a worsening of the situation, even creating deflation or inflation.

Young Merchant: "That is correct."

Disciple Merchant: "Y-You..."

Young Merchant: "What?"

Disciple Merchant: "— You're going to start a second currency."

Young Merchant: "That's right."

Disciple Merchant: "For real?!"

Young Merchant: "The potential growth of the Central Continent is weak. So just what is wrong with attempting to invest in and encourage the growth of a new and rising economy?"

Disciple Merchant: "We are at war with the Central Continent."

Young Merchant: "If you're trying to make money during a war, make sure to stay far away from the flames... That's a quote by my Master. Those who are risking their lives are merely the soldiers."

Disciple Merchant: "How can you be assured that we will continue to grow?!"

Young Merchant: "Look at my first two proposals."

Disciple Merchant: "..."

Assistant: "?"

Disciple Merchant: "...!"

Young Merchant: "That's right."

Disciple Merchant: "Do you really think you can do that? You intend to give back the Isle which we risked so much for?!"

Young Merchant: "You won, so you're in that position."

Disciple Merchant: "Why would you think that? Why are you even doing this?! You— You want to use our waters... to trade with the Demons!"

Young Merchant: "Yes."

Disciple Merchant: "Why... would..."

Young Merchant: “Because I am a merchant.”

Disciple Merchant: “What...?”

Young Merchant: “Because I am a merchant, I will trade with the Demons. Do you think this world is split into allies and enemies? Into black and white? If that is so... then what do you think the Hero is working so hard for? Can’t you see that he sees something greater?”

Disciple Merchant: “...”

Young Merchant: “More than anyone, perhaps I have rather unorthodox views on things. I don’t understand things like Justice, but what I do know is that I want to be happier, like we all do. If we can cooperate like this, perhaps all of us can benefit. Or am I wrong?”

Raises hood.

Fire Dragon Lady: “We also humbly beg for your cooperation.”

Disciple Merchant: “Ah... Horns.”

Young Merchant: “This is the Fire Dragon Lady. Currently, she represents the Council of the only territory in the Demon World where humans and demons co-exist in harmony, the Free City of the Gate.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “We require salt... and would like to borrow your island. We will make amends. We will pay the necessary price. We will maintain our role as the defeated ones on that Isle, we humbly beg for your cooperation.”

Disciple Merchant: “Ah, ah—”

Fire Dragon Lady: “You haven’t raised the alarm yet. If you wanted to, we would already be your prisoners. But it appears you are considering the proposal?”

Assistant: “What’s that?”

Fire Dragon Lady: “This is my Rose Crystal Horn, I am very proud of it.”

Assistant: "Umm..." *Heart races.*

Fire Dragon Lady: "?"

Assistant: "Can I touch it?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Of course."



Barter: This refers to the practice of exchanging goods directly for other goods rather than using currency.

The Young Merchant's Plan (TL Note: FINALLY): At present, the price of wheat in the Central Continent has gone up tremendously. However, originally, food items like wheat are necessities, and hence demand for them is unlikely to change dramatically, and the value ascribed to each unit

of wheat is likewise likely to remain stable. In other words, the price of wheat wasn't actually going up, rather, the value of the currency was falling dramatically. (In this situation, price refers to the value ascribed to a unit of good.) This situation is what the Young Merchant was referring to when he said he wanted to 'Sell the Gold of the Kingdoms'. This is also precisely why the Young Merchant made sure to expend almost all of his gold in buying wheat and other commodities, so that at the peak of the economic crisis, he would be able to make an incredible amount of profit from selling off his stock of commodities.

----- The Southern Artic Ocean, Near the Gate

Hero teleports in!

The Hero: "Is this it? — I teleported here."

The Hero: "This sure is familiar. Especially the water source... Here?"

(If ending the war is the job of the military, then finding the end is the job of the King.)

The Hero: "Ahh, Demon King. Demon King... I'm not a King, I'm just a Hero. I can't find the end after all — Why has it come to this!?"

(What's wrong? Don't you want to be mine? I'm not selfish.)

The Hero: "Nonsense, haven't you been abusing me ever since we met? Do this, do that. Making me go to places. Dragging me everywhere. And now doing this. — That's all you've done. Even then, you didn't even object to me going to the Demon World. Even when I needed you to be selfish, you selfishly weren't selfish."

(I'll be satisfied as long as we can get to 'The Other Side of the Hill' together)

The Hero: "Really?"

(No...?)

The Hero: "I'll definitely let you see it. You and I, and the Female Paladin, and Grandpa, and the King, and the Maid Sisters and the Maid Chief, and the Mage, and the people of the City of the Gate, and the people of the Southern Kingdoms, and the people of the Village of Wintering. I even want to show it to our opponents in the Central Continent. To the Demon Races too... That's why. That's why—if all I can do is kill and destroy, then I'm useless."

Water gushes.

The Hero: "I haven't been able to show even one of what I want to show to other people."

Water gushes.

The Hero: "That's why I'm going to stop. I can talk all I want about righteousness and justice. But if all I can do is destroy and kill, how can I say I'm doing great things!"

Water gushes.

The Hero: (...Ah. The Pale... A Giant-Class member of the Pale. They've got long-ranged weaponry and ample food supplies. If I want them to withdraw, that's what I'll have to target...)

"Good."

The Hero: "...?"

"...Your considerations."

The Hero: "Huh?"

"...It's good that you're considering that much."

The Hero: "Eh? ...Ah?"

The Mage: "..."

The Hero: "Where have you been all this while?!"

The Mage: "...Waiting."

The Hero: "Huh?"

The Mage: "...Library."

The Hero: "In the Cosmic Library? How did you even get there?!"

The Mage flinches.

The Hero: "Don't tell me..."

The Mage: "...Only members of a certain race can enter."

The Hero: "...?"

The Mage: "Them." *Points.*

The Hero: "? ...Yeah, they're Demons."

The Mage: "Are you still going to kill them?"

The Hero: "...No. A bit. I just want to stop them."

The Mage: "...Understood."

The Hero: "Huh?"

The Mage: "I will watch."

The Hero: "...? I understand."

The Mage casts a spell.

The Hero: "Whoa, what!"

The Mage: "...It's for communication."

The Hero: "A Correspondence Charm?"

The Mage nods.

The Hero: "You haven't changed at all, you still act like you've just woken up from a nap."

The Mage: "Don't understand — Go."

The Hero: "?"

The Mage: "...Demon King is waiting."

The Hero: "You know about the Demon King?"

The Mage: "...Wait. I will deal with this. I will end it. ...Using an Epic-level Destruction Spell, I will destroy the Gate."

The Hero: "If you do that, we won't be able to cross to the Demon World."

The Mage: “...”

The Hero: “...Is that okay?”

The Mage nods.

The Hero: “How much?”

The Mage: “Strongest.”

The Hero: “Why would you do such a thing?!”

The Mage: “Important.”

The Hero: “What is?”

The Mage: “You.”

----- The Frozen Artic Limit, above the Gate

The Mage: “Total Demon force 2,670. Begin calculation of distance. Beginning thawing of Compression Techniques. Thawing 15% ... 37% ... 59% ... 81% ... Ready to eliminate conflict with current target area.”

The Mage: “Hero...”

Air buzzes with magic.

The Mage: “In order to assist the Hero, I will begin successive Compression Techniques to buy time for you to attack. Huh!? Understand, you fool!

I have awoken my eyes! I know why you had to leave us! It's because of me! It's because of me! That day! At that night! I couldn't do anything for your pride! All I was was a burden! How many nights have I passed thinking of how to right that!!! I will be like you!!! I won't just be a lousy underling! I! CAN! DO! IT!!!”

The Hero: “She's overzealous again...”

The Mage: “Disappear! You pieces of shit!”

Boom! Bang! Crash! Boom!

Clank! Bang! Boom! Boom!

Boom! Bang! Bang! Boom!

The Hero: "She teleported?! Don't tell me she's teleporting to each Demon individually to deal with them?!"

"*Threat eliminated.*"

The Hero: "Understood. Moving out. Epic-class Lightning Destruction Spell!"

Lightning crackles! Lightning ball shoots out!

"*Insufficient.*"

The Hero: "Huh!? Okay, more mana! Carnage-class Lightning Destruction Spell, activate!"

"*More.*"

The Hero: "The tension in her voice is gone. Alright then, let's go... Ahhhh! Lightning! Lightning! Lightning! Deity-class Lightning Obliteration Spell!"

The Hero: "How was that?"

"*...Massive area of destruction confirmed.*"

"*Commence special entry via High Speed Flying Magic.*"

The Hero: "Yes!"

Blasts off.

"*15 seconds.*"

The Hero: "Have I gone too far? I think I've created a far too massive crater."

"*Approaching critical speed factor.*"

The Hero: "Eh?"

"Increase velocity and break through."

The Hero: "Y-yes!"

Air rushes!

The Hero: "It's bright. Wh-what. This wind. Where am I?!"

"Underground world."

The Hero: "Eh?"

"You were transported to the Underground World through the Repulsion Force Ball of Light... The Alternate World you call the Demon World does not exist."

----- Omake!

"Wow... You're scarily good."

"Here, try this! It's peach juice mixed with sugar and milk, then chilled. I think it'll taste great after a bath!"



TL Note: It is a custom in Japan to drink flavoured milk (chocolate, strawberry, peach etc.) after taking a bath, particularly at a public bath.

Volume 2 Chapter 3, “For the Sake of this Land”

---- The Kingdom of Metal, Near the Border, the Attacking Army of the Kingdom of White Night

Horses stampeding.

One-Eyed Commander: “Move! Move!”

Officer: “Come on! Giddy up!”

One-Eyed Commander: “Hahahaha, I’ll show you! I’ll show you what Hell looks like!”

Officer: “Yes! Morale is high among the men!”

One-Eyed Commander: “Of course, the prize of our conquest is booze and women.”

Officer: “Hahaha, indeed!”

One-Eyed Commander: “Report strength!”

Officer: “Yes! Light cavalry 1,500. Foot infantry 500! Mercenary horsemen 400, Mercenary infantry 600. The 500 infantry are one day behind us. The 400 mercenary horsemen will meet up with us in an hour. The 600 mercenary infantry are advancing via a different route through the forest.”

One-Eyed Commander: “And the other thing I asked you to do?”

Officer: “Yes! We are using the prisoners from the Kingdom of Metal. They should reach the Palace by dawn tomorrow morning. There, they will deliver our proclamation of war.”

One-Eyed Commander: “Good. All, halt!”

Light Cavalryman: “Halt! Halt!”

Light Cavalryman: "Halt!"

Officer: "Listen up! Orders from the Commander!"

One-Eyed Commander: "Listen up! Riders of White Night! At one, tomorrow morning at dawn, we will attack the Kingdom of Metal! The Kingdom of Metal is a constituent of the traitor Tripartite Union. They are fools who dare to oppose the will of the Spirit of Light and have been officially excommunicated. This is a Holy War, let us bring the wrath of the Spirit upon their heads!"

"— *Destroy the Heretics!*"

One-Eyed Commander: "We will now be commencing with a slow march through the forest where we will rest and catch some sleep. Sleep will be conducted in shifts. Tend to your horses, tomorrow we will have much work to do. Your weapons will not be idle in your hands. Sleep with your blades which thirst for the blood of the heretics! Children of White Night, the Blessings of the Spirit are with you!"

"— *Yes, Sir!*"

Officer: "Hehe, they're all riled up."

One-Eyed Commander: "The Kingdom of Metal is so weak, it's not even an enemy. Ah! Ah!!!"

Officer: "What's happening!"

One-Eyed Commander: "The Darkness! It burns! My eye burns! It's consuming me! It's consuming! They took it, those evil Demons! My eye! My light! Gyahahahahaha! That's right, I'm going to show you, Lone Winter King. Don't forget about me, that traitor Fortress Commander. I will destroy that hated Demon World, I will bring down that treacherous Demon lackey Lone Winter King. I will do whatever it takes, whatever it takes! My work will be born from the fires of Hell. Beginning with the Kingdom of Metal. Those who have humiliated me will now taste the highest form of shame!"

----- **The Kingdom of Metal, Border, Plains at the Foot of the Mountain, the Kingdom of Metal's Border Defence Line**

Scout: "Ah! They're here! We've received word from the signal pyres!"

Metal Lieutenant: "So they've really come..."

Disciple Soldier: "They are indeed fast. They were willing to tire themselves to take advantage of the element of surprise and not give us time to prepare."

Scout: "More details should be arriving by carrier pigeon from over the mountain..."

Disciple Soldier: "Hmph. I more or less understand. They should have a highly mobile force with Light Cavalry at the centre, strength roughly 2,000. This will consist of a mixture of both regular forces from the Kingdom of White Night and mercenaries. The Scouts have confirmed their departure."

Scout: "Yes!"

Metal Lieutenant: "Two thousand?"

Disciple Soldier: "Maybe a bit more. Well, with this sort of timing, to even use such a force would no doubt cause back civil unrest. The King of White Night is bound to keep some military power in his Palace to combat a serf uprising, but the fact that he's willing to send this many is already proof of his seriousness."

Metal Lieutenant: "We've got 400 soldiers from the Kingdom of Winter undergoing training here and alongside the 500 settlers we can arm as irregulars... We're no match for them."

Disciple Soldier: "It's a joke."

Metal Lieutenant: "...How ridiculous."

Disciple Soldier: "Everybody!"

Paces about.

Disciple Soldier: "We have just received word from our Scouts! Two thousand riders from the Kingdom of White Night are currently headed this way! That they can send two thousand horsemen from the Kingdom of White Night to attack us means that the Kingdom itself has a minimal military presence! That's how much they are willing to gamble to destroy us!"

Everybody! Let me state now, this is your land! This is your one and only land! In other words, if we win this battle, the land in your hometown, your families, your fields, your homes are all protected!

It's true that the enemy is many. But we have enough! Among you are some who have fled from the Kingdom of Winter, and even some who have comrades and brothers in the Kingdom of Winter. Let us fight this war for them!

Eat some potatoes and smile! The Female Paladin, the White Swordsman... My teachers once said. 'If you can laugh in a battlefield, you have already won.' The enemy outnumbers us by many times, but we will look at them and laugh! We have decided! There will only be one outcome! Victory!"

----- The Borders of the Kingdom of Metal, a Mountain Pass, the Attacking Army of the Kingdom of White Night

Clank! Clank! Clank!

One-Eyed Commander: "Once we cross these borders, the ground will be drenched in the blood of our enemies. Hahahaha!"

Light Cavalryman: "Sir! Enemy approaching from the front!"

One-Eyed Commander: "What!? It's not even dawn yet. How could they have gotten our Declaration of War already?!"

Light Cavalryman: "Numbers are uncertain, but they've blockaded the pass!"

One-Eyed Commander: "Shameless!"

Officer: "Yes!"

One-Eyed Commander: "It's probably just the Border Guards. There can't be many of them. Perhaps a few hundred. In terms of training and equipment, they've been training to fight the Central Continent and some of them are probably experienced too."

Officer: "Yes!"

One-Eyed Commander: "All units advance! Those silhouettes up ahead are the enemy! There is no village so there will be no pillaging! Let the infantry behind us deal with the stragglers. Break through the line and scatter the enemy!"

Officer: "All units advance!"

Light Cavalrymen: "Warriors of White Night!"

Horses charging.

Light Cavalryman: "Do you see them?"

Light Cavalryman: "Ha! This is a joke! They must have gone to hide in some holes or something or the other, the cowards! The Kingdom of Metal is filled with fools!"

Light Cavalryman: "Let's go!"

Light Cavalrymen: "Onwards!"

Horses charging.

Light Cavalryman: "?!" *Falls off horse.*

Light Cavalryman: "You fell off!? How lousy! Ahahahaha! I guess I'm the best at riding after a—?!"

Light Cavalryman: "Wh-what!? Why are you all falling off!? What's wrong with the horses?!"

Light Cavalryman: "Ah! Something is tripping the horses! What's this?"

Light Cavalryman: "These are nets... The kind they use to catch fish."

Light Cavalryman: "Cut them! They're just nets! Dismount and cut!"

Hack.

Light Cavalryman: "Agh, these nets! They're really well made!"

Arrows whistle through the air.

Light Cavalryman: "Arrows? Archers?! Where from?!"

----- The Kingdom of Metal, the Borders, Plains at the Foot of the Mountain, the Kingdom of Metal's Border Defence Line

Disciple Soldier: "Right, it's time for my lecture."

Metal Lieutenant: "Right now? The enemy is right before us!"

Disciple Soldier: "My Master placed a lot of emphasis on education. No matter what time it was, everything was subordinate to learning. That was how I was taught."

Metal Lieutenant: "Y-yes!"

Disciple Soldier: "There are three reasons why one would use cavalry. The first is speed: the ability to move quickly from battlefield to battlefield. It is an important consideration for an Expeditionary Force, but that's not really related this time.

The second is deployability. This may appear to be similar to the first reason, but this refers to movement about the battlefield itself, the ability to attack the enemy's weak points before the enemy has time to respond to them. Hence deployability and speed are completely different considerations. Deployability is the art of a Commander finding gaps in the enemy's formation and bringing powerful force to bear against it. The important measures to combat deployability are to deny intelligence to the enemy and to ensure organic and adaptable reactionary forces."



Metal Lieutenant: "Y-yes..."

Scout: "The enemy is close! We can see the dust forming! Estimated time of arrival: One minute!"

Disciple Soldier: "The third point, and more important for this battle, is the Breakthrough Ability. To begin with, the attack power of cavalry is not very high. Since they're mounted, they can't use powerful weapons which require two hands to control. Nevertheless, that cavalry can already be so powerful is due to the strength of the warhorse and the incredible amount of training and technique required to properly ride into battle."

Also, a charge from high ground has fantastic destruction ability. With the increased momentum and charge, cavalry possess a breakthrough ability infantry can only dream of."

Metal Lieutenant: "What are you going on about!? That breakthrough ability is heading here as we speak!"

Disciple Soldier: "Don't panic."

Scout: "Thirty seconds!"

Disciple Soldier: "Everybody! Load arrows!"

Soldiers load arrows.

Disciple Soldier: "First target! Aim for the standing soldiers and soldiers who have dismounted! Their focus is speed, so their armour is likely to be weak! If it's too difficult, aim for the breastplate, it's a large area!"

Scout: "Contact! Ah! It's messy! Horses are flying everywhere! Ahh, they're in range! They're getting closer!"

Disciple Soldier: "Wait! Wait for it... Fire!"

Arrows whistling through the air.

Metal Lieutenant: "Multiple hits! They're going down!"

Disciple Soldier: "Excellent! It's time to do our duty! Support soldiers! Take the bows after they've been fired! Pass them the next bow and reload the current one! Soldiers of the Kingdom of Metal fire! You! Raise your heads! Keep your stance low! Trust the Trenches, if we stay together, we may just win!"



Trenches: Trenches were first used in the 19th century, during the American Civil War. It allowed one to take cover from enemy fire and yet return fire at the same time. The depth was roughly up to the head, with steps allowing the arms to be extended from the trench. Since one could fire out of the trench, there was still a chance of being hit while in it. They could also be used to conceal one's position, as in this case.

"Ah! Something is tripping the horses! What's this?"

"These are nets... The kind they use to catch fish."

"Cut them! They're just nets! Dismount and cut!"

Disciple Soldier: "Second target! Aim for the horses and cause chaos! Pull up the nets! They're coming in!"

Soldiers from the Kingdom of Metal yank hard.

Disciple Soldier: "Fire!"

Arrows whistling through the air.

Metal Soldier: "We did it! They're going down!"

Support Soldier: "Reloaded! Let's go again!" *Exchanges bows.*

Metal Soldier: "That's quick!"

----- **The Borders of the Kingdom of Metal, a Mountain Pass, the Attacking Army of the Kingdom of White Night**

One-Eyed Commander: "What's happening?! Why have they stopped!"

Officer: "The enemy opposition..."

One-Eyed Commander: "Well, pick up the pace and break through! Advance!"

Officer: "All units advance! The enemy numbers are few! Press on!"

One-Eyed Commander: "What are you all doing!"

Screaming.

Light Cavalryman: "Commander! There are nets ahead!"

One-Eyed Commander: "Nets?!"

Light Cavalryman: "Yes! They've placed wire-reinforced fishing nets along the way, the horses are getting trapped in them! And they're firing on us as well!"

One-Eyed Commander: "Enemy numbers?"

Light Cavalryman: "Unknown."

One-Eyed Commander: "Why don't you know? Aren't you being attacked?"

Light Cavalryman: "The enemy are hiding in holes in the ground, we have no line of sight with them."

One-Eyed Commander: "Ah! Redeploy! Push on through the front line, get the rear reserve troops to circle around the left and right flanks!"

----- **The Kingdom of Metal, the Borders, Plains at the Foot of the Mountain, the Kingdom of Metal's Border Defence Line**

Arrows whistling through the air.

Disciple Soldier: "What we're currently hiding in is called a trench."

Metal Lieutenant: "Yes!"

Disciple Soldier: "Man-made emplacements like these are known as field defences. I first heard them from my teacher, and I haven't heard them from other people, so as far as I know these could be her inventions."

Scouts: "Horses are tripping all over the place! The frontline is in chaos!"

Disciple Soldier: "Remember that this is one way of killing off the enemy's breakthrough ability. — Continuous fire! Support infantry on loading duty split into two units, Guards and Loaders! Guards units clear the cavalry who managed to clear the zone of operations and the cavalrymen who have fallen off their horses, make sure they stay out of the way! Archers and Loaders, mass your attack on the right flank! Fire at will! Don't panic and aim well. By your side, to your left and right, are brave soldiers and comrades armed with strong bows and powerful spears! Even if you take the time to aim properly, we will still fire quicker than usual. Trust your comrades!"

----- The Borders of the Kingdom of Metal, a Mountain Pass, the Attacking Army of the Kingdom of White Night

One-Eyed Commander: "What, they haven't broken through yet!"

Officer: "Yes."

One-Eyed Commander: "Kill them! Kill them! The first soldier who breaks through the frontline will get ten gold pieces! Destroy those weak soldiers of the Kingdom of Metal as if they're just a wall of matchsticks!"

Light Cavalryman: "We've broken the stalemate!"

One-Eyed Commander: "Are we moving?"

Light Cavalryman: "The Flanking Attack is showing some effect. The left flank's defence is strong, but it seems the right flank is thin. They're crossing through the forests and attacking the enemy position from behind!"

One-Eyed Commander: "Alright! Throw our whole force behind them! Increase the pressure on the front with the traps, but advance with the centre behind the right flank!"

Light Cavalrymen: "White Night Warriors!"

Cavalrymen ride away.

Officer: "...No."

Light Cavalryman: "What's wrong, sir?"

Officer: "This—"

One-Eyed Commander: "What?"

Officer: "The right flank is advancing too fast... It's like they're being... sucked in."

----- The Kingdom of Metal, the Borders, Plains at the Foot of the Mountain, the Kingdom of Metal's Border Defence Line

Metal Lieutenant: "The enemy has started to flow to the left flank."

Disciple Soldier: "To begin with, it has always been an Oblique Order. We keep them tied up at the front and then flow to the right flank. However, the cavalry at the frontline is too disorganised to break through. Though they have no breakthrough ability, they could try to pressure us by attacking from behind. That's the current state of affairs."

Metal Lieutenant shudders.

Disciple Soldier: "Well, let's get to work. Lieutenant, it's time for you and I to shine."

Metal Lieutenant: "Yes!"

Footsteps.

Metal Lieutenant: "Let's go! Guards Units! Respond to the cavalry rolling up the left flank with long spears! Have no fear! Enemy numbers are equal to us!"

Disciple Soldier: (Equal numbers... If we could, that would work.)

Metal Lieutenant: "Farmers! Soldiers! Lower your heads and thrust out your spears! Do not fear the horses! The enemy's sword's reach is only from upon the horse, you are safe in the trenches!"

Metal Lieutenant: "Let's go! For the sake of this land!"

Soldiers: "For the sake of the land!"

Scout: "Spear units on the left flank have contacted the enemy. The enemy frontline is weakening!"



Flanking Attack: Usually, soldiers assemble into formations and advance strongly forward until they meet the enemy. However, if one can attack the enemy from the side without them expecting, they can either attack the enemy at a weak point or draw them into a fight with two fronts. For this purpose, an attack from the side of the formation has a far stronger effect.

Oblique Order: Ordinarily, formations face the enemy in straight and equal formations. However, if one were to purposely tilt the battle order and stack forces on one flank, military force can be gathered on one side in order to break through the line. If one knows where the enemy forces are gathered, one can firmly defend that side and hence gain an advantage.

However, if the enemy knows which side is being firmly defended, he can avoid that side and attack strongly from another flank. In this way, the movements of the enemy can be pre-empted, at a cost.

Disciple Soldier: "The enemy appears to be pulling back from the right wing. Everybody! Test your bows! — It's time to attack!"

Bows being strung.

Disciple Soldier: "The enemy is abandoning his attack midway and rolling towards the left flank! This is a good thing. Take aim! Aim for the flanks of the horses, take down the Commanders and Officers if you can, they should be with the horsemen! Those guys are heading for the undefended flank of our forces! They will attack us relentlessly from behind and plunge our forces into chaos! Let's save our comrades in the right flank, don't let the enemy through! Let's go! Volley!"

Soldiers: "Yes!!"

Arrows whistling through the air.

Light Cavalryman: "What?!"

Arrows whistling through the air.

Light Cavalryman: "Aghhhh!"

----- The Demon King Castle, Lowest Level, the Palace of Death

The Chief Maid: "Why hasn't she come out... Demon King."

The Chief Maid: "It's been, a month? — I've had enough. If she continues to absorb more in there, her entire soul is going to be corrupted. What is she doing!"

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The Chief Maid: "What's that..."

Hick.

The Chief Maid: "It stopped..."

Hick.

The Chief Maid: "..."

Door opens slowly.

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty...?"

The Demon King: "I'm good."

The Chief Maid: "Demon King?"

The Demon King: "What's wrong? Chief Maid. Why so serious?"

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty...?"

The Demon King: "I'm hungry. And tired. And my eyelids are really heavy."

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Demon King: "Hehe. I'm alright. Let's go back."

The Chief Maid: "Where?"

The Demon King: "— To the battlefield."

The Chief Maid: "Yaaaaaa?!"

Raises sword.

The Demon King: "Wha! You ungrateful cur! You dare to raise your hand against your own master?!"

The Chief Maid: "What have you done to the Demon King! Demon King! You're not the Demon King! You're not!"

Swords clashing.

The Demon King: "Where did this longsword come from..."

The Chief Maid: "My Demon King doesn't make such a shameful and based face when she laughs!"

The Demon King: "That's a pity. I'll be smiling like this from now on."

The Chief Maid: "Haiyaaaaaa!"

Swords clashing.

The Demon King: "You indeed come from a top-level Demon Race. Your techniques are quite splendid."

The Chief Maid: "Demon King! Demon King!"

The Demon King: "Hey! Stop shouting my name endlessly!"

The Chief Maid: "I will have nothing to do with your name. This is the name of the Demon King, my one true master!"

The Demon King: "Insolent!"

Clash!

The Chief Maid: "The Demon King is smart, logical, reasonable, calm and cynical! It's true that she can be quite annoying, but my master makes a shy and loveable face when she laughs. She can wear dirty clothes forever and she hates washing, she's terrible at cooking and cleaning. She's my choice. My destiny!"

The Demon King: "That's... a bit harsh, isn't it?"

The Chief Maid: "I am a Maid!" *Stands erect.*

The Demon King: "—!"

The Chief Maid pants.

The Demon King: "You're tired. If you stop now, I'll go easy on you..."

The Chief Maid: "!"

The Demon King: "Hehe... If it's butlers and servants, I can easily acquire some more. So shut your trap and let us go back to the Castle."

The Chief Maid: "..." *Raises sword.*

The Demon King: "Just die!"

The Chief Maid: "—! Demon King..."

The Demon King: "Heh. Where are you aiming? You want to hit me... I'm sorry, but I'm completely uninjured whereas your wrist..."

Slash.

The Chief Maid: "Agh... Demon King?"

The Demon King: "?"

The Chief Maid: "...Demon King, just one more time, fight... Do you remember that black, fluffy, warm thing you love so much?"

The Demon King: "Are you trying to make me laugh?"

The Chief Maid: "Ahh!"

The Demon King: "Ahh?"

The Chief Maid: "I will! Throw! You! Out!"

The Demon King: "Heh, why? You'll never... catch me?!"

The Chief Maid: "Hey, yah!" *Tosses.*

The Demon King: "You may have surprised me but so what?"

Bonk! Door slams!

The Chief Maid: "Hah, hah... If she escapes another time, she'll kill me..."

Bangbangbangbangbang.

The Demon King: "This is... the Burial Chamber!? Damn you!"

Bangbangbang.

The Chief Maid: "Demon King, I will continue to wait for you."

Bangbang.

The Demon King: "What a waste of time! How stupid! Do you not understand? This body belongs to me! I am the Demon King!"

Boom.

The Chief Maid: "Hah, hah... Demon King... Your Majesty. I hope you become—ten times stronger, a hundred times stronger, please. Your Majesty... Don't lose..."

----- The City of the Gate, Self-Governing Council, Study

East Fortress Base Commander: "Is this... for real?"

Aide-de-Camp: "Yes!"

Demon Girl: "...Umm. Yes..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "..."

Aide-de-Camp: "Three days ago, armies of the Pale have been detected advancing in the direction of the gate. We're not certain of the scale, but it is likely slightly less than a thousand."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Have we sent them a message?"

Aide-de-Camp: "Well..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "I hear there has been no message."

Aide-de-Camp: "With their present military strength, they're probably just trying their luck."

East Fortress Base Commander: "We can't warn them against it, can we?"

Demon Girl: "I-I-I'm sorry."

East Fortress Base Commander: "No, please."

Aide-de-Camp: "..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "The problem is with the content this letter."

Aide-de-Camp: "Yes."

— The three countries of the Southern United Kingdoms which are opposed to the Demons are currently engaged in battle with the combined forces of the Central Continent. The three countries of the Southern United Kingdoms have weakened their defences; the shores and their capital cities are practically stark naked. It is now a splendid opportunity to extend the 'Land of the Golden Sun.'
Report concluded."

East Fortress Base Commander: "This."

Aide-de-Camp: "Yes."

East Fortress Base Commander: "It's a human. Yeah, it's a human. I know for sure. This letter is from a human. It reeks of humanity, it has the stench of a human who would betray his kind. — Who? Who would do such a wretched thing?"

Aide-de-Camp: "..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Lady, who do you think this is?"

Demon Girl: "I didn't get a good look, but... this letter... I bought it from a pickpocket kid. But... this merchant definitely met with a Demon of the Pale... Umm, he was about as tall as the Aide-de-Camp... But thinner, and he wore a hood... He breathed like... this..." *Hisses.*

East Fortress Base Commander: "Oh?"

Demon Girl: "It was wet... like a snake..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "He damaged his throat? Or a disease?"

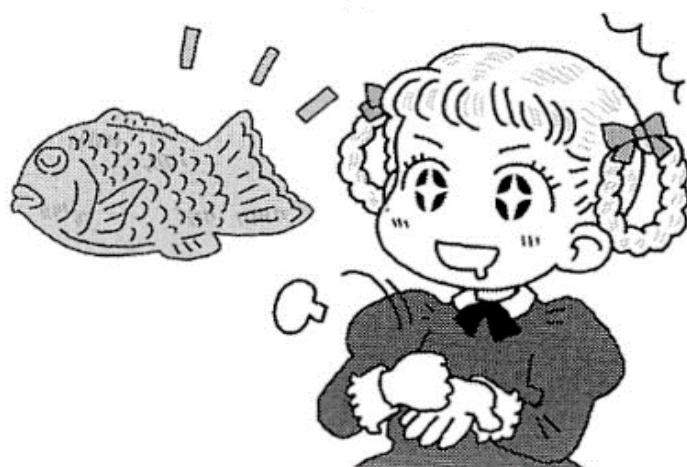
Demon Girl: "I'm sorry. I don't know..."

Aide-de-Camp: "Let's find him."

East Fortress Base Commander: "He's not going to be on the streets anymore but let's do it. I don't care if you're a demon or a human, check everyone. Damn. Just what is going on! We've got no choice since they want a war so much. Going around doing so much killing, just what do they want!"

----- Omake!

"Ah, that's right! If I bake a pancake in the shape of a fish and fill it with sweet beans, it'll be both cute and delicious!"



TL Note: She's just invented taiyaki. It's a Japanese pastry shaped as a fish, traditionally filled with sweet azuki bean paste.

Volume 2 Chapter 4, “The useless Demon King who appeared too late!”

----- The Trip to the Underworld

The Hero: “...The Demon World?”

“...*Not the Demon World, the Underworld.*”

The Hero: “So the Demon World is underground?!”

“*That is correct.*”

The Hero: “...”

“...*To begin with, Teleportation Magic transports you to a different place... It doesn't let you jump across dimensions or anything.*”

Crush, crush.

The Hero: “What?!”

“*Altitude is low.*”

The Hero: “What?”

“*Gravity is weak underground. It is replaced by Pressure.*”

The Hero: “Gravity? Pressure?”

“...*Gravity is a force from the earth which pulls you downwards. This force makes objects fall. Pressure is force applied against an object. In the Underworld, the core of the Earth crushes everything... After it crushes it to molten lava, some will flow out to the surface.*”

The Hero: “Why does my flying magic not work properly? Is there some sort of relation?”

“...*The Underworld is close to the core, hence there is tremendous Pressure. One cannot fly very high.*”

The Hero: "Really?"

"*Really.*"

The Hero: "I don't understand why I'm here."

"*You should.*"

The Hero: "Why?"

"*This is about the Demon King.*"

The Hero: "Where is she? What's happened to her?"

"*The Demon King is there.*"

The Hero: "I don't understand."

"*The Demon King Castle is deep underground.*"

The Hero: "I understand that!"

Lava flows.

"...*In place of the current Demon King.*" Crackles. "...*I will take her place.*"

The Hero: "What? I just heard a strange sound."

"*You're getting out of range... I will defend the Human World.*"

The Hero: "Can you?"

"...*Leave it to me.*"

The Hero: "..."

"...*I said leave it to me.*"

The Hero: "..."

"..."

The Hero: "I understand. I won't be able to hear you anymore. I'm counting on you."

"Understood."

The Hero: "Umm."

"..."

The Hero: "Thanks for coming... You've really helped me out."

"...I see." *Explosions and laser beams.* "I'll be waiting for you."

The Hero: "Here we are. There should be some guards here, shouldn't there? Well, whatever. I'll break through. Let's go... Lightfoot Magic!"

The Hero: "...Hey, Mage."

The Hero: "...Hey."

The Hero: "We're really at the limit of the signal. — I guess there's no choice. Let's go to the lowest level. It should be this way..."

Boom!

The Hero: "Through the Treasury, down the Great Hall... Third floor..."

Crash!

The Hero: "Right, I'll apologise for the destruction later! Fifth floor!"

Boom!

The Hero: "Seventh floor! Wh-what!?"

Roars!

The Hero: "This pure blackness... I've never felt such a Demonic presence before. Demon King... You've become this strong?!"

----- Northern Plains, on a Field where the Snow has Gathered

The Female Paladin: "Are they assembled?"

Seneschal: "Yes, the Central Continental Expeditionary Force has assembled in their expected numbers. Noblemen and lords from all over the Central Continent have assembled in full force. Their army is on the move."

The Female Paladin: "How many?"

Seneschal: "Close to 40,000 with 28,000 combat personnel. The rest are non-combat service personnel. All of these have been confirmed by the Telescopic Scout brigades."

The Female Paladin: "Don't worry. Victory is not dependent on how many soldiers you have. In fact, the less soldiers you have, the lesser the burden on finances."

Winter Soldier: "Ha, hahaha, yes! It is as you say, ma'am!"

The Female Paladin: "So what are we sending them today?"

Seneschal: "30 bottles of Ice Wine, 3 Boars, and 6 Pigs."

The Female Paladin: "Hmm, they'll be having a feast tonight."

Seneschal: "Yes."

The Female Paladin: "You don't seem confident."

Seneschal: "No, I don't like the feeling of being extorted from."

The Female Paladin: "Don't think about it. The more you think about it, the stronger it'll get."

Seneschal: "I see."

The Female Paladin: "Next up is the feed."

Seneschal: "Feed?"

The Female Paladin: "Yeah, with this many horses, they'll definitely require lots of feed, right? Things like dried barley or grass. Some of the noblemen have caravans plying from their homelands with feed, but most of them intend to acquire it here. It's much easier to bring cash than so much wheat."

Seneschal: "Yes."

The Female Paladin: "Maintain contact with the farmers in the area. Make sure we expand the field of contact this time. Use the Merchants' networks if we have to. If the soldiers come and are told that they have no feed, they might cause trouble. These merchants are all sympathetic to the Tripartite Union. Let them sell the wheat to the enemy. They shouldn't have to die for their sympathy."

Seneschal: "What do you mean?"

The Female Paladin: "Let them soak the feed in waste water beforehand. Of course, we have no intention of killing all those poor horses; just to make them unwell before the battle. If we destroy the spirits of their horses, they will have difficulty communicating and coordinating across the vast battlefield. If they choose to still meet us in battle, their breakthrough ability will be blunted. This is not the most chivalrous of tactics, but desperate times call for desperate measures."

Seneschal: "But why target the feed?"

The Female Paladin: "The other alternative would be to poison the food with which the soldiers themselves consume, right? But that's too obvious. Compared to that, poisoning the horse feed is something unprecedented. I feel really bad for the horses though. Many of them will die on the battlefield. But their deaths will bring us victory."

Seneschal: "Well, it is a pity about all those horses, but as warhorses, they will be fighting to their very last breath. For a soldier like myself, that's all we can ask for."

The Female Paladin: "Alright, send out the order."

Winter Soldier: "Yes!"

Seneschal: "We'll be busy these coming few days."

The Female Paladin: "We'll just have to endure."

Seneschal: "What's next?"

The Female Paladin: "I'm still considering various factors."

Seneschal: "Oh?"

The Female Paladin: "Shall I fight a bear barehanded in front of the enemy, to scare them?"

Seneschal: "I think not, madam. That would probably spoil your image."

----- Palace of Winter, Chamber of Audiences

The Mage: "...Heh."

The Mage: "...Snores. ...Snores."

Lone Winter King: "..."

The Mage: "...Mm. ...Heh."

Lone Winter King: "That's my throne."

Disciple Merchant: "Yes."

Assistant: "There's a strange girl..."

The Mage: "Phew..."

Lone Winter King: "Why is there a girl sleeping on my throne?"

Disciple Merchant: "Well..."

The Mage rubs eyes.

Assistant: "?!"

Lone Winter King: "It could be some sort of dangerous assassin."

Disciple Merchant: "..."

The Mage: "!"

Lone Winter King: "!"

The Mage: "Ugh. ...Yawn."

Door opens.

Butler: "Young man. I've brought some tea. Take a break from the books—
Ahhhhh?!"

Lone Winter King: "What's wrong?"

Butler: "It's the Mage! Wh-why are you here!"

The Mage: "..."

Butler: "Where have you been? The Hero and the Female Paladin have been really worried about you. This is not the place to be drooling like that!"

The Mage: "...Asleep."

Butler: "You're still the same. Well, the Hero isn't around right now so you're still normal, I suppose."

----- Winter Palace, Chamber of Audiences

Butler: "Allow me to introduce myself. She is one of the three Companions of the Hero, the Mage."

The Mage nods.

Butler: "When she's like this, she's safe."

The Mage nods.

Lone Winter King: "She is one of the legendary Heroes as well?"

Disciple Merchant: "No way."

Butler: "That's right. She was the Party's massive-damage-dealing specialist. She knows practically every spell, the strongest mage throughout the land who has earned epithets such as 'The Living Nightmare' and 'The Sleeping Sorceress of Carnage.'"

The Mage: "...I always liked, 'The Magic Murderer.'"

Lone Winter King: (*hushed voice*) "*I think we should keep our distance.*"

Disciple Merchant: (*hushed voice*) "Me too."

Butler: "She's the kind of girl who really goes overboard when she does things."

Lone Winter King: "...I don't really know what to make of her."

Disciple Merchant: "I understand that she's really powerful."

The Mage: "...I'm going to sleep."

Butler: "Don't sleep now! Have you met the Hero yet?"

The Mage: "Yes."

Butler: "And?"

The Mage: "He's going to the place you call the Demon World."

Lone Winter King: "...I see."

Disciple Merchant: "That means we're the only ones here controlling the situation now."

Butler: "What's he doing? Does anybody know?"

The Mage: "He's following instructions the Demon K... I mean, the Crimson Scholar left behind before she left."

Lone Winter King: "?!"

Disciple Merchant: "You are acquainted with the Scholar?"

Butler: "I heard she travelled for a while..."

Lone Winter King: "What were her instructions?"

The Mage: "...She didn't tell."

Lone Winter King: "Why?"

Butler: "I thought you were friends"

The Mage: "...The Scholar is soft. And I'm not talking about her boobs. Something softer than that. You could say the Scholar and I come from the same race. We're relatives. Sisters?"

Lone Winter King: "Relatives?"

The Mage: "...And—"

Butler: "And?"

The Mage: "..."

Butler: "Wake up!"

The Mage: "...The Scholar knows nothing of the present circumstances here. She does not know that we are at war... That's why her instructions are definitely irrelevant."

Lone Winter King: "...Really? Now that you say it..."

The Mage: "...But she took measures."

Disciple Merchant: "What sort?"

The Mage: "...It was found that families who reared Artiodactyla in their homes were less susceptible to viruses of a contagious nature... She realised this was the result of exposure to a lesser strain and developed a method of treatment to boost the resistance of patients to the virus, in other words, to get them to develop an Immunity to the disease through a special and specific course of Immunisation."

Lone Winter King: "?"

Disciple Merchant: "...Umm, did you understand?"

Assistant: "I didn't understand anything!"

The Mage: "..."

Lone Winter King: "Could you say it in a way that is easier to understand?"

The Mage: "We have developed a cure for smallpox."

Lone Winter King: "?!"

Disciple Merchant: "Do you know what you're saying?!"

Butler: "Smallpox... The nightmare of this land?! A million, no, three million people die from it every year... It makes your body break out in hives and pus and even if by some miracle you do manage to recover from it, it'll leave you with scars which you have to carry for the rest of your whole life. It's the kind of nightmarish disease that warrants the torching of entire villages who have developed the disease!"

The Mage: "...I know. I did my research."

Lone Winter King: "You're a scholar too, then?"

Disciple Merchant: "I see."

The Mage: "...I specialise in Folklore."



Artiodactyla: These are an order of animals whose toes are split into two, like cows. Giraffes, camels, deer and hippopotami are also part of the order.

Immunity: This refers to a biological function within your body which helps to remove viruses and other diseases. Your immune system is designed specifically to attack anything which isn't your own cells, or helpful cells, and destroy them by overwhelming them with White Blood Cells.

Immunisation: This refers to treating smallpox through a vaccination. It was first discovered in 1796 by Englishman Edward Jenner, allowing the death rate of smallpox, then at a frightening 40%, to be dramatically reduced cheaply and efficiently. In 1980, the WHO (World Health Organisation) declared smallpox to be completely and thoroughly eradicated. Smallpox is one of the only victory mankind has had over a virus which has plagued us for centuries.

Lone Winter King: "I see."

Disciple Merchant: "If it's true, then this is an unprecedented step forward for all of mankind."

Assistant: "My father and brothers died from smallpox."

Butler: "There hasn't been anyone who has been able to fully recover from smallpox before."

Lone Winter King: "Mmhmm."

The Mage: "...It's not a cure. It's a prevention."

Lone Winter King: "It's all the same."

Disciple Merchant: "How?"

The Mage: "...You make a medicine out of a certain, weaker strain of the disease and introduce it to the patient. He will get a lighter form of the illness, but it will not be smallpox."

Butler: "I see. Those who get smallpox once don't get it a second time, if I'm not wrong."

The Mage: "...That's the system."

Lone Winter King: "How long does it last?"

The Mage: "...About seven years."

Lone Winter King: "That is amazing news."

The Mage: "And..."

Lone Winter King: "?"

The Mage: "It'll only cost every citizen of the Tripartite Union and other cooperating countries one silver piece a head."

Lone Winter King: "...!"

The Mage: "How pleasant, isn't it?"

Lone Winter King: "With this, the winds have changed!"

Disciple Merchant: "Indeed. We can put an end to this war."

Assistant: "Amazing!!!"

The Mage: "...Also, I'm a Demon."

Lone Winter King: "?"

Butler: "You're joking."

The Mage: "...No."

Lone Winter King: “...”

Disciple Merchant: “...”

Assistant: “?”

The Mage: “...Please.”

Lone Winter King: “In other words, this smallpox prevention technique was developed together with Demons?”

The Mage nods.

Lone Winter King: “And we are to disseminate it to our people?”

The Mage nods.

Lone Winter King: “...”

The Mage: “...”

Disciple Merchant: “Your Majesty... I beg of you, you’ve heard this from the troops at the front line before, have you not? It’s true that the Demons may appear menacing and vicious, but they are an eloquent and knowledgeable race.”

Assistant: “...”

Butler: “...”

Disciple Merchant: “I’m not saying we should build a bridge of friendship between us. But now that we’ve been declared enemies of the Spirit, perhaps we can try to understand how they feel? Of course, if they attack us, we will attack back. They are the enemy after all.

“However, just like how the Human World has many different Kingdoms, it is likely that the Demon World consists of many different countries and tribes as well. It may not be prudent to continue this damaging war while knowing so little about the people we profess to fight.”

Lone Winter King: “Why... do you want this?”

The Mage: "...Why?"

Lone Winter King: "Why do you want a friendship with us?"



Folklore: If the study of literature is the study of analysing recorded texts and books, then the study of folklore is gathering and studying records which may have been passed down from mouth to mouth and preserving them through writing for further study and posterity. Of course, nowadays, folklore can be passed down via written means as well, and can still be studied similarly.

The Mage: "..."

Butler: "Have you slept too much that you can't even come up with an answer now?"

The Mage: "...I've had enough of nightmares."

Assistant: "..."

The Mage: "...I want to have good dreams when I go to sleep."

Lone Winter King: "I see..."

Disciple Merchant: "..."

Lone Winter King: "This is not a contract or anything. I am worried about the backlash this may have from the Central Continent."

However, as far as my name as the Lone Winter King carries, I will carry those words firmly in my heart and do my very best to make sure no blood need be spilt unnecessarily.”

Disciple Merchant: “Thank you.”

Butler: “Mage...”

The Mage: “...I’m a Demon. Really.”

Stomach rumbles.

Lone Winter King: “Hahaha! You’re a hungry Demon then! Alright. Shall we lay siege to my kitchen? If we lay siege to them, I’m sure my staff will come up with something fantastic in a jiffy!”

----- **The Kingdom of Metal, Near the Capital, a Building of the Holy Order**

Metal Lieutenant: “Hurry and clean it! Use more water!”

Disciple Soldier: “The cloth is boiling! Use more cloth!”

Metal Soldier: “The citizenry is offering us their assistance. What should we do?”

Metal Lieutenant: “What should we do?”

Disciple Soldier: “Of course, I’m thankful. Prepare more water and get the furnace going! Borrow some cauldrons and boil some water in it.”

Supply Soldier: “Bringing another one in right now!”

Light Cavalryman of White Night: “Ughhhh!”

Metal Lieutenant: “White Night...”

Disciple Soldier: “Don’t think about it! We have direct orders from the Metal Fist King to treat any and every casualty! We’ll make no distinction, except to carry out Triage for the heavily injured!”

Those with light injuries should be moved to the tents outside, the civilians can help with that as well. Those with moderate injuries should be moved further into the Holy Order, get them to stem the bleeding and use strong alcohol to disinfect their wounds."

Metal Soldier: "Yes!"

Light Cavalryman struggles.

Light Cavalryman of White Night: "Ughhhh. I'm dying, I won't make it!"

Disciple Soldier: "Get it together! You won't die from those injuries, but you need to rest!"

Metal Soldier: "Report!"

Disciple Soldier: "I'm listening."

Metal Soldier: "The tally has been completed. Our forces have suffered 18 dead and 221 injured. The Kingdom of White Night has 304 dead and 892 injured with 450 prisoners. Also, we've confirmed the fallen body of the Assistant Commander, but the Commander, whom reports have confirmed is a man with one eye, has not been identified, whether living or dead."

Metal Lieutenant: "How troublesome."

Disciple Soldier: "If he returned home, that's a good thing..."

Metal Lieutenant: "Is that so?"

Disciple Soldier: "If he keeps his movements quiet and travels with just a few soldiers, it won't be difficult for him to avoid detection."

Metal Lieutenant: "That's true."

Supply Soldier: "General!"

General! Amazing! Perfect! We will follow your orders to the very end!



Triage: In emergency situations where there are very many injured people and patients, there will likely be insufficient personnel or supplies. Triage is conducted to maximise the potential for saving lives. Patients are divided into one of four different categories, each with differently coloured triage tags. The order of treatment then follows the order $1 > 2 > 3 > 0$.

0: The patient is on the brink of death, and even with urgent medical treatment, the chances of survival are extremely slim. (Black)

1: It is possible for the patient to survive if medical treatment is sought urgently and immediately. (Red)

2: Immediate medical treatment is not currently necessary to ensure the survival of the patient, though treatment must eventually follow in due time. (Yellow)

3: As injuries are light, the life of the patient is not in any immediate danger. (Green)

Since patients who are classified as category 0 have practically been left to die, in situations where there are enough personnel and supplies to deal with the patients, triage should definitely not be used.

Disciple Soldier: “Huh?”

Supply Soldier: “General! Victory! Long live the General!”

Long live the General! Long live the General!

Disciple Soldier: “Wait for a bit. I’m no general. I’m just the Commanding Officer of the Border Battalion.”

Metal Lieutenant: "Well, that's fine, isn't it?"

Disciple Soldier: "But it's wrong!"

Metal Lieutenant: "A normal citizen or a settler who has hitherto been a serf has no knowledge whatsoever of the ranking system of the Military. They won't understand the difference between the Commanding Officer of the Border Battalion and a General. That's why they're in such awe... To them, a General is just someone who's really cool."

Disciple Soldier: "—Really... cool?"

Metal Lieutenant: "Yes, that's right. To someone like me, a punk from a Settler family, there's really no difference. And when we want to display our gratitude for someone as cool, as heroic as yourself, small fry like ourselves like to shout, 'Long live.'"

Disciple Soldier: "...Is that... so?"

Metal Lieutenant: "Yeah. General! Today's battle was fantastic! This is a story our grandchildren will tell their grandchildren. For this reason, let us continue fighting and do our best!"

Disciple Soldier: "That's... good."

Supply Soldier: "General. Ah."

Disciple Soldier: "I'm worried. If we want to make sure we're capable of continued operations, we'll need more food and rest, and we'll also need to reform border security and surveillance. We'll also have to submit a report to the Palace about the incident."

----- In Deep, Deep Sleep

"*Why... What a terrible sleep...*"

"*Ugh... Ughhhh...*"

"What a sticky night. I should get the Chief Maid to bring me a towel. My..."

"Umm."

"Who's that?"

"That's not it."

"Ah! Is this what they call an out-of-body experience? It's my first time."

"No, the real me is sleeping over there, but it's clear that it's a terrible state of sleep. Perhaps this has to do with falling out of synchronisation with my spirits."

"Ohhh. The real me is waking up. So I can still move around while my spirit is divorced from my body, right? How extremely interesting."

"Looking at it like this, I might get discarded. It's a bit shameful that the Chief Maid continues to bully me about it, but is it really terrible to have all this bouncy-bounciness... In the Human World, the size of a woman's bust is considered a good thing. Natural curviness isn't seen as just flab, in fact, it's often seen as more feminine... People consider it more maternal, and from an objective point of view, it's even erotic. Oh!"

"My body! It's fine to be erotic and all, but why am I doing such lewd things? What's my body doing! I can tell even without researching! Wh-where am I touching! Stop that! My boobs are jiggling too much."

-----ro

“Huh?”

----- Hero.

“Huh!?”

----- Hero ↗

“Wh-where is this coming from, what a terrible image! No, it comes from somewhere within my imagination, what are you intending, body! Just what has happened to me. Someone give me a clear answer! You’ve got two seconds! One. Two. Time’s up! Answer!”

----- Hero

“Wait. Stop doing that. No matter how much my body is my enemy, no matter how much I am my own enemy, he belongs entirely to me, no one else is allowed to touch him like that!

Flab!

Get those perverted hands away! That’s mine! He gave himself to me first! That is completely and entirely mine! Don’t even think about seducing him with that flab of yours!”

----- **The Palace of Death, the Basement of Darkness**

Earth explodes.

The Chief Maid: “Hero!”

The Hero: “Get out of the way!”

The Chief Maid: "Hero! This is ridiculous! The Palace of Death can only be entered by the Demon King! It contains the memories of the past Demon Kings!"

The Hero: "There's no such thing as a Hero who isn't ridiculous!"

Door explodes.

The Demon King: "—"

The Hero: "Oi! Demon King! Demon King!"

The Chief Maid: "The door exploded?!"

The Demon King: "—My"

The Chief Maid: "Hero! Hit it!"

The Hero: "Eh?"

The Demon King: "—My room."

The Chief Maid: "Hurry!"

The Demon King: "—"

The Hero: "What are you saying?"

The Chief Maid: "She's absorbed the evil spirits of the past Demon Kings! There's something else inside her..."

The Hero: "Oh I see, I understand."

The Chief Maid: "No, she's been contaminated! What should we do."

The Demon King: "—"

The Hero: "Oi, Demon King! Demon King! Go back to normal!"

The Demon King: "—"

The Hero: "Hey, Demon King! Didn't you say there were some things only Demon Kings could do! That you would become stronger!"

That you would put your life on the line to restore peace to this tragic world! You know they're calling you a saint out there? Do the right thing!"

The Demon King: "HeЯ0*."

The Hero: "Has she come back?"

Translator Note

In the original novel, the Demon King's lines are given in Katakana when she is being possessed. The Japanese writing system consists of three separate and distinct alphabets (and logographic): Kanji, Hiragana and Katakana. Typically and in modern times, Hiragana and Kanji form the bulk of what one would call a Japanese sentence, being used for almost all the words. Katakana is usually only used to transliterate foreign loanwords into the Japanese language. As a result, speaking entirely in Katakana gives a harsh and foreign dimension to the text that encapsulates how strange and alien the Demon King's voice is when she is possessed. There is no way to accurately depict that using the English language, so I have resorted to leetspeak. J

The Demon King: "—1t'S M3."

The Hero: "Don't lie, you previous generation!"

The Demon King: "B3c0mE MiNe, H3r0."

The Hero: "I refuse."

The Demon King: "1f y0u C0m3 t0g3th3R w1tH m3, I'LL g1v3 Y0u h@lF Of ThE w0rlD."

The Hero: "I refuse!"

The Demon King: "Why—"

The Hero: "Listen up, you old-fashioned Demon King! What's with this half the world crap, you swindler! In the first place, the world doesn't belong to you, it's not something you can distribute. You're making a big mistake if you think you can bribe a Hero with such insincere words! Those stiff stage lines aren't something a Demon King in this day and age would be saying!"

The Demon King: "WH—"

The Hero: "And!"

The Demon King: "?!"

The Hero: "I already own that body you have there. It's mine. We have a contract. You can invade it, pollute it, but it's still mine! Come out. Get out of that body which belongs to me!!!"

The Demon King: "—Wh@T"

The Hero: "That's right, Demon King!"

The Demon King: "—Ar3 yOu S@y1ng"

The Hero: "Huh!? Oi! Are you listening, Demon King!"

The Chief Maid: "Demon King!"

The Demon King: "—Wh@t bUiSHiT @r3 y0u sPOuT1ng!"

The Demon King: "Shut up."

Clouds of Demonic Magic swirl in the air.

The Demon King: "Shut up, damn you... This isn't the sweet reunion I was looking forward to."

The Hero: "Of course it is, my strong-willed Demon King."

The Chief Maid: "Demon King! Demon King! It's really you, it's really you!"

The Demon King: "I've made you wait — my Hero."

The Hero: "You've slept for too long — my Demon King."

----- **The Kingdom of Metal, the Capital, Craftsmen Street**

One-Eyed Commander pants heavily.

One-Eyed Commander: "! Aghhh! Oww! It hurts, it hurts... This suffering. Lone Winter King, Base Commander. Those impure bastards consumed my eye and my pride! Agh! Aha! Hahaha!"

One-Eyed Commander pants heavily.

One-Eyed Commander: "But I've discovered their secret. Isn't that right? King of White Night? There's a Demon girl here. *Pant. Pant. Pant.* Haha! Here, the world will be plunged into a dungeon, drawn into the endless darkness befitting of those who dare to be heretics... Gyaha! Aghh!"

...Footsteps.

Craftsman on the Street: "I hear the General has returned in victory."

Assistant on the Street: "It was a splendid victory!"

Footsteps.

Craftsman on the Street: "There're lots of injured people."

Assistant on the Street: "Yeah, we should really go and help."

Footsteps fade out...

One-Eyed Commander: "...Heeheehee... They said it."

----- **The Kingdom of Metal, the Capital, at the Back of the Press Workshop**

Door opens.

“Sis, we’re late!”

“Wait just a bit, alright?”

One-Eyed Commander pants heavily.

“And when I’m dressed like this, don’t call me Sis.”

“Hehe, just a bit more.”

“No way. When we start the show, the people need to believe it. Until the Mistress comes back, everybody needs to believe that I’m actually her.”

One-Eyed Commander creeps up.

“Yes. So this is next, right?”

“Do you understand?”

“I remember. Beginning from the right, it’s f—u—d—a—r...?”

“Good job.”

“Ehehehe.”

One-Eyed Commander: “...So even that Crimson Demon has a family. Hehehe. Does an apostate need a family? I’ve never heard such a thing. Let’s sink that bond into the abyss.”

“Hmm.”

“Did you do it?”

“Yep! — A new moveable type.”

“Brush it! Brush it!”

“We’ll do that tomorrow when the craftsman comes in.”

“Really? Then shall we go buy dinner? I’d like to go see everyone. ↗”

----- The Kingdom of Metal, the Capital, Printing Press Warehouse

Little Maid Sister: "What shall we have for dinner today ♪ Some hot soup, with some black bread and bean stew ♪"

Little Maid Sister: "The bed in the dormitory is so soft ♪ That's where I want to be. Ahhh?!"

One-Eyed Commander steps out.

One-Eyed Commander: "..."

Little Maid Sister: "Oh, it must be a craftsman? It's already so late! Shouldn't you go home to your family? They should be at home, not over here."

One-Eyed Commander: "I will protect the purity of the light."

Little Maid Sister: "Oh, you must be a Templar?"

Draws sword.

Little Maid Sister: "?!"

One-Eyed Commander: "Templar? Don't group me together with that group of heretics. I am the Noble Commander of the Second Holy Crusaders! Hahahahaha! Gyahahahaha!"

----- The Kingdom of Metal, the Capital, Late at Night in the Workshop

Elder Maid Sister: "Sis? Sis? Stop playing around—Aren't you hungry? Hurry up and come back!"

Pacing back and forth.

Elder Maid Sister: "She must have been invited in for a feast by somebody? We can't underestimate her ability to find food."

Door opens.

Little Maid Sister: “—! —!”

One-Eyed Commander: “It’s a pleasure to finally meet you, Crimson Scholar.”

Elder Maid Sister: “Wh-who!”

One-Eyed Commander: “Huh? Ahahahaha! Hahahahaha! That’s right. I apologise for the rudeness. You probably don’t know how I am, you serf-born wench. — I am the Angel of your Death. Hahahahaha!”

Elder Maid Sister: “!”

Little Maid Sister: “—! —!”

One-Eyed Commander: “What am I going to do? I’m sure you know?”

Elder Maid Sister: “Let my sister go.”

One-Eyed Commander: “Hahahaha! That’s an interesting expression, heretic. Gahahahaha!”

Elder Maid Sister: “...”

One-Eyed Commander: “First, kneel. And apologise to the Spirit.”

Elder Maid Sister: “I believe in the Spirit. Kneeling is nothing.”

Little Maid Sister: “—! —!”

One-Eyed Commander: “You pathetic bitch, you’re not fit to use the name of the Spirit! Kneel! Beg for forgiveness! Confess your sins and weep in shame!”

Elder Maid Sister kneels.

Elder Maid Sister: “...What do you mean?”

Little Maid Sister: “—! —!”

One-Eyed Commander: “This dark warehouse will be your Confession Chamber. Kuhahahaha! Ahahahaha! But you will find no mercy here.” *Draws sword.*

One-Eyed Commander: "What do you think of this sword, Scholar? You two are the same. You both call yourself Crimson, and you both suck blood. That's right. Hahaha! You will receive no mercy from the Spirit here, die in shame and report your sins to Him yourself! Allow me to send you straight to hell!"

Raises sword.

Elder Maid Sister: "!"

Little Maid Sister: "—!"

Door slams open.

One-Eyed Commander: "Who is it?!"

Disciple Soldier: "Just an ordinary soldier."

Parries sword strike.

Little Maid Sister: *Rips off cloth over mouth.* "Sis!"

Elder Maid Sister: "Sis!"

One-Eyed Commander: "Dodge this, then!"

Swords clashing.

Disciple Soldier: "—Ha! Ha!"

Elder Maid Sister: "Ah."

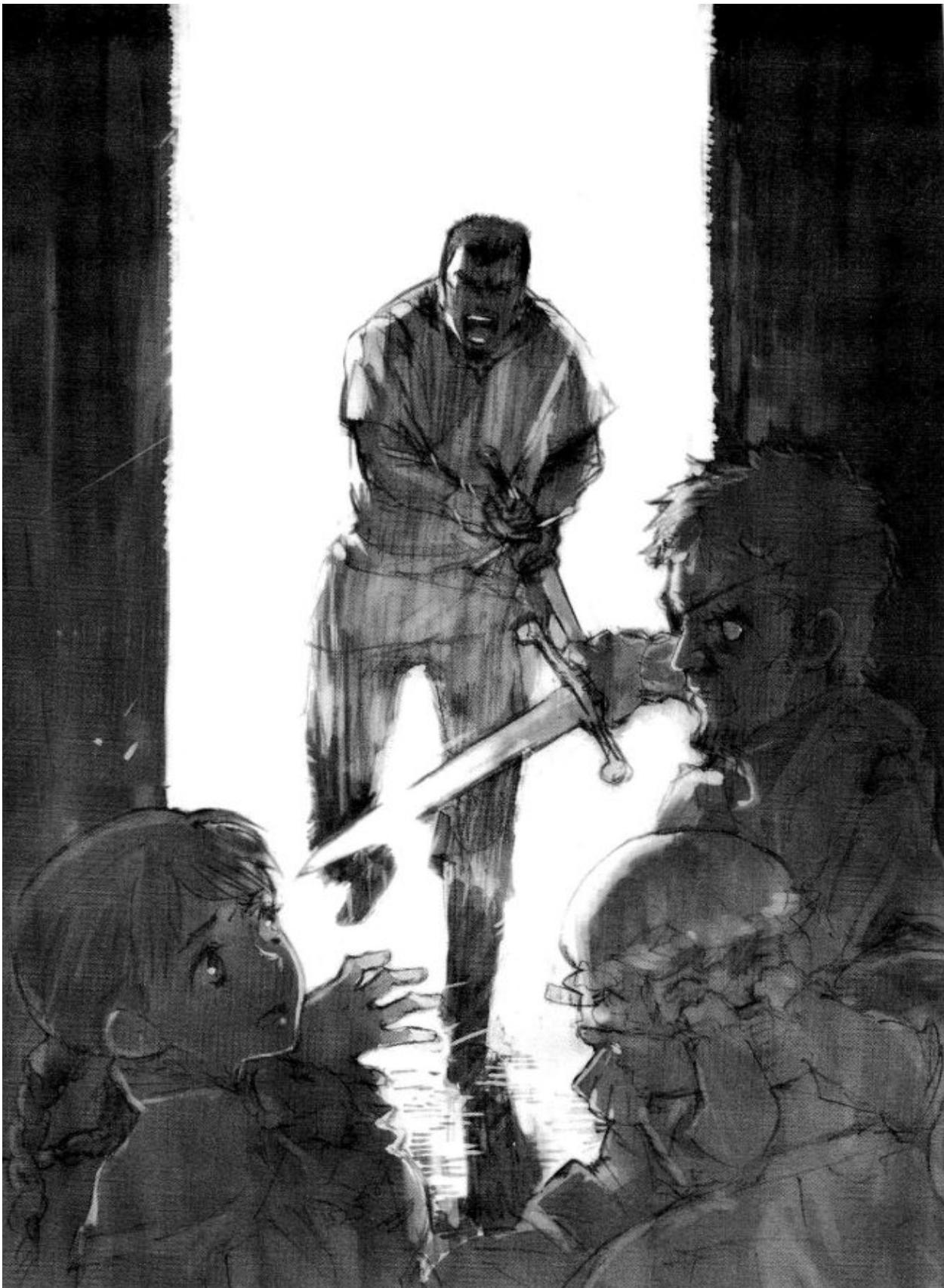
Little Maid Sister: "It's the Disciple Soldier!"

One-Eyed Commander: "You're not even twenty years old! I am the Commander of the Crusaders! Do you really think you can beat a person like me, who has been to hell and back!"

Swords clashing.

Elder Maid Sister: "Ah! Your wrist!"

One-Eyed Commander: "Hehehehe. What's wrong? Where's your heroism now? Eh? What did you think, you would be able to accomplish by flying here trying to save these girls!? Ahahahaha! You punk!"



Swords clashing.

Disciple Soldier: "I am just an ordinary soldier. — I am no hero."

Swords grinding.

One-Eyed Commander: "Then give way to your superiors!"

Swords clashing.

Disciple Soldier: "Leaving aside that you're not my commander, it is the place of the soldier to stand up to the poor decisions of his commanders!"

Swords clashing.

One-Eyed Commander: "How pig-headed! Your right hand hurts, doesn't it! Take this! And this! And this! Ahahaha!"

Disciple Soldier: "—!"

Little Maid Sister: "No!"

(Don't lose concentration. Watch his claws. Watch his line of sight. — No, not that way! Don't look at it! Watch it! Observe it! That's how you'll find an opening!)

One-Eyed Commander: "You have no chance of winning! Ahahaha! Gyahahaha! I won't let you walk away from this! I won't forgive you!"

Sword strikes.

(Calmly and coolly compare the advantages he has over you, and the advantages you have over him. Whether it's a war or a deal, do the same. Stay calm. Destroy his advantages and attack his weaknesses. What are your strengths — consider all of these.)

Swords clashing.

Disciple Soldier: "— Indeed, I am a man of no strengths. I did not win yesterday."

One-Eyed Commander: "Shut up!"

Elder Maid Sister: “!”

Swords clash.

One-Eyed Commander: “What! What?! Why hasn’t your wrist fallen off?!”

Disciple Soldier: “Reinforced steel — on my specially made gauntlet.”

Swords clash.

One-Eyed Commander: “!”

Disciple Soldier: “They all said ‘Thank You.’ To this useless person. — ‘Thank you for defending us.’ To a soldier who devotes his life to defending his people, there is no higher honour, is there? I’ve awakened to my true calling, there is no higher advantage. Because of this, I will fight to the end!!!”

----- On the Northern Plains, at the Camp of the Central Continental Army

Continental Knight: “Dammit!”

Mercenary Archer: “What the hell!”

Infantry Section Commander: “It’s that thin, bean soup again, with some crusty, hard bread.”

Continental Knight: “Crusty? Mine is just crumbs.”

Mercenary Archer: “What’s going on?”

Infantry Section Commander: “I thought we had enough money?”

Continental Knight: “The noblemen are throwing banquets every night.”

Mercenary Archer: “While we get soup with some salt in it if we’re lucky.”

Infantry Section Commander: “I hear the price of food has gone up everywhere.”

Continental Knight: “Is that so?”

Mercenary Archer: "Don't you at least know about this? The heartlands of the Central Continent are already beginning to experience widespread famine. That's why I agreed to take part in the expedition to the South, where the food prices haven't gone up yet."

Squire: "Section Chief, this is just between us, but..."

Infantry Section Commander: "What?"

Squire: "I've heard a rumour that we brought a lot of money to this expedition but very little food."

Continental Knight: "...!"

Mercenary Archer: "Wh... What?!"

Infantry Section Commander: "What the hell!"

Continental Knight: "Are the Commanders for real?!"

Mercenary Archer: "Well, it's to be expected."

Infantry Section Commander: "What are you saying?"

Mercenary Archer: "If you think about it, considering the size of the expedition, can you imagine how much bigger it would have to be to accommodate the caravans of food and the attendants? You would get the paradoxical situation of needing to carry more food in order to carry more food. In a place so far from main supply lines, rather than carrying heavy food, it's probably easier, faster and lighter to just carry large sums of money and buy food at the venue."

Infantry Section Commander: "That's true."

Mercenary Archer: "I fear the noblemen are probably panicking right now. No matter how much money you're carrying, without food, we will all starve to death over the winter. I'm sure they want to make sure the war ends before winter. I believe they will aim for the Southern United Kingdoms, where there is still food."

Continental Knight: "Is that so..."

Mercenary Archer: "And to think we believed the words of the Commanders and undertook this fruitless expedition to the South. Dammit!" *Spits.*

Drinks soup.

Mercenary Archer: "Drinking this thin soup makes me want to fight even less."

Infantry Section Commander: "Then shouldn't we hurry up and attack the enemy?"

Continental Knight: "No, the horses have been acting up for a few days now..."

Infantry Section Commander: "What?"

Squire: "It's true."

Continental Knight: "I've also heard that some of the countries are pulling out. The Magic Cavalry of the Kingdom of the Lake has already retreated home."

Mercenary Archer: "Hmph! What could that useless bunch of scholars do on the battlefield anyway?"

Continental Knight: "On top of that, there have been incidents of squabbles about what to do after we advance upon the Southern United Kingdoms and conquer them. Factions have been forming to decide which noble and king will receive which parcels of land in the Southern United Kingdoms."

Mercenary Archer: "You've got to be kidding me!"

Infantry Section Commander: "..."

Mercenary Archer: "We came here to fight. To come to the battlefield and fight, fight, fight. If we survive the carnage with our swords dripping in blood, then we'll have some meat skewers and revel in some good wine. That's a mercenary's war. I want no part in any in-fighting or crude politics between selfish, greedy noblemen. If they really have so much arguing to do, the solution is easy. Decide by the sword!"

Infantry Section Commander: "..."

Continental Knight: “...”

Mercenary Archer: “What!? Did I say something wrong! Do you have a problem, Sir Knight!”

Infantry Section Commander: “Umm...”

Mercenary Archer: “Can we really tide through the winter on such thin soup?”

Continental Knight: “The Commander is approaching, wrap up what you have to say.”

Mercenary Archer: “Yeah, fine, fine. It’s this way. Noblemen are always this way. Whenever good things happen, it’s because the noblemen worked for it. Whenever bad things happen, it’s because the Spirit is testing our resolve. How stupid... I’m going back to the Commander’s tent. I have something to discuss there. We’re getting our pay in gold. At this rate, we’re all going to starve to death. At the very least, they should give us some meat or some bread as salary.”

Infantry Section Commander: “...”

Squire: “...”

Infantry Section Commander: “There’s no choice. Situations are different.”

Continental Knight: “Yeah, though things are bad, we still get support from home. But for you mercenaries, there’s really no one looking out for you.”

Infantry Section Commander: “But at this rate...”

Squire: “It’s getting colder.”

----- The Demon Castle, Bottom Level, a Luxurious Bedroom

The Chief Maid: “No, it’s really fine!”

The Demon King: “What are you holding back for?”

The Hero: "I'm not very good at it but I'll do my best, just endure it for a while."

The Chief Maid: "No, that's not it. I can't! How can I receive such a thing when the Demon King hasn't yet! I fear this is too much."

The Demon King: "Do you really think the Hero is such a good-for-nothing?"

The Hero: "...I knew she wasn't willing to trust me."

The Chief Maid: "That's not it, I can see him too."

The Demon King: "The point is that I see him. Alright! Don't explode."

The Chief Maid: "I'm going to explode."

The Demon King: "It's just for a bit. It'll be over soon!"

The Chief Maid: "No way! Wh-what are you doing?"

The Hero: "Shh..."

The Chief Maid: "Do something, Demon King."

The Demon King: "Hurry up and help."

The Hero: "I'm pressing on it, Demon King, so hurry up and do the magic."

The Demon King: "Alright."

Magic buzzes.

The Hero: "Alright, it's looking good."

The Chief Maid: "Ah."

The Demon King: "How is it? Can the wrist heal? Is the wound closing?"

The Hero: "Yep, the wound is cleaning up well... Is this a high-pressure freezing spell? I've heard of this spell, the Blade of Ice, which uses high-speed water jets and freezing magic to heal, but I've never seen a technique like this before."

The Chief Maid: "Oh, don't look so closely."

The Demon King: "The Third Demon King was known as the Demon King of Frozen Nightmares. This is a technique he used to have."

The Hero: "Make sure to freeze the wound thoroughly so there will be no blood loss."

The Demon King: "Like this?"

The Hero: "Seal the corners... The next part is going to be excruciatingly painful, so... a Hypnosis Spell... or a Minor Healing Spell."

The Chief Maid: "Ow!"

The Demon King: "Chief Maid, cling on to him."

The Chief Maid: "I'm sorry."

The Hero: "...Ohh, your boobs are nice."

The Demon King: "Pay attention!"

The Hero: "Okay! Chief Maid, I know it's hard, but I need you to take deep breaths and breathe out slowly."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "Just like that."

The Chief Maid: "....."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "...She's been hypnotised. Alright... Resurrection Magic!"

The Chief Maid: "!"

The Demon King: "Has something happened?"

The Hero: "Yeah, her arm's probably gone numb and she's lost the strength to cling on. Her wound is probably gone."

The Demon King: "Thank you."

The Hero: "No, the wound was fortuitous. If she had damaged some nerves or internal organs, I wouldn't be able to do anything."

The Demon King: "..."

The Demon King: "She's sleeping so soundly."

The Hero: "I got her to sleep for a while. It'll decrease her blood pressure and help with the recovery."

The Demon King: "I see..."

The Hero: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "Ahhh, I'm tired."

The Demon King: "Well."

The Hero: "?"

The Demon King: "Thank you."

The Hero: "She's my friend too, I honestly wanted to help her out."

The Demon King: "Not that... For coming here, and saving me."

The Hero: "Oh... Yeah."

The Demon King: "Umm."

The Hero: "?"

The Demon King: "Are you tired?"

The Hero: "...Yeah?"

The Demon King: "...You can use my boobs. Even though the Chief Maid is clinging on to them. Otherwise, how about my lap?"

The Hero: “?”

The Demon King: “A lap pillow is a thing, right? It’s a special service just for now.”

The Hero: “...Uhh, but the Chief Maid is there too.”

The Demon King: “You don’t want it?”

The Hero: “...” (*deep in thought*)

The Hero: “...” (*deep in thought*)

The Hero: “...Hmm” (*thinks long and hard*)

The Demon King: “You don’t?”

The Hero: “Ahh! ...Fine, just for a bit.”

The Demon King: “Yeah.”

The Demon King: “Why is the back of your head just touching the tip of my knee?”

The Hero: “Huh, huh, uhh? No, I didn’t?”

The Demon King: “Why, do you have some kind of reservations because of some traumatic imagery you experienced in your childhood?”

The Hero: “I’m sorry.”

The Demon King: “A lap pillow is supposed to be a very close and intimate thing without any distance between us.”

The Hero shuffles in.

The Hero: “...”

The Demon King: “Are you complaining?! Do you think I’m fat!”

The Hero: “No! That’s not it!”

The Chief Maid: “...”

The Hero: "That being said, the thighs of the Chief Maid—"

The Demon King: "If you like thighs, you can put your face here!"

The Hero: "Sorry, sorry."

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Demon King: "What are you thinking about, even though you're a Hero!"

The Hero: "No, it's precisely because I'm a Hero that I am a lot worse at enduring such things than the average young man..."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "..."

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Demon King: "The Chief Maid's breathing is getting shallower."

The Hero: "Yeah, she's fine now."

The Demon King: "...Fluffy."

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "What's wrong, Hero? Is something up? What's happening over there? Is everybody okay?"

The Hero: "There's a lot of trouble on the ground, something big has happened."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "?"

The Demon King: "Right, I know about this."

The Hero: "Eh?"

The Demon King: "—On the ground."

The Hero: "Ah. Yeah... You've heard from the Mage."

The Demon King: "She's a trusted comrade of the Hero, I've trusted her to deliver information."

The Hero: "What kind of library is it?"

The Demon King: "The Cosmic Library is the hometown of my race, and also our stronghold."

The Hero: "And she's been reading magical grimoires there all this while?"

The Demon King: "What's been happening? On the ground?"

The Hero: "Yeah, where should I begin..."

The Demon King: "...Anywhere. Tell me everything."

The Hero: "I guess I'll start from the Declaration."

The Demon King: "Yeah." *Nods.*

The Hero: "They're saying that the Crimson Scholar is a Heretic of the Church."

Volume 2 Chapter 5, “Ahh, it’s Snow.”

----- The Northern Plains, Camp of the Tripartite Union

Winter Soldier: “Commander! Commander Female Paladin!”

The Female Paladin: “What?!”

Winter Soldier: “Enemy movement!”

Seneschal: “What?! But we haven’t even decided when the battle will take place!”

Winter Soldier: “Th—that’s—Only one division of mercenary soldiers are moving. It seems they’re moving of their own accord. We’ve verified their Commander through the telescope. They appear to be hiding even from their own people.”

Seneschal: “Fools! Don’t they at least know the basic rules of engagement?”

Winter Soldier: “What should we do?”

Seneschal: “Our troops are also quickly moving to position, the Third Heavy Armoured Division is ready to engage—”

The Female Paladin: “No!”

Seneschal: “But we cannot compromise our position.”

The Female Paladin: “Look at the big picture.”

Seneschal: “?!”

The Female Paladin: “It’s certain that these mercenaries are now breaking the laws of both the Central Continental Church and Command. They will definitely face harsh disciplinary measures when they return, so they must have some reason—I fear it has something to do with lack of food stocks. But if we were to enter into a prolonged fight with these mercenaries, the 20,000 soldiers of the Central Continent will descend upon us as reinforcements.”

Seneschal: "...That's true."

The Female Paladin: "Send a directive to the Winter Knights to don Military Equipment No. 1. Don't carry anything unnecessary, speed is of the essence."

Winter Soldier: "Yes!"

Seneschal: "But we don't even have 200 knights."

The Female Paladin: "The enemy is just mercenaries, right? They probably only have about a thousand."

Seneschal: "Ridiculous!"

The Female Paladin: "I just want leather mail and gauntlets, shields are not necessary."

Female Templar: "Yes!"

Seneschal: "Commander Female Paladin!"

The Female Paladin: "This is not a battle."

Seneschal: "No, but what about chainmail?! And plate mail?!"

The Female Paladin: "Too heavy. And it takes too long to wear as well."

----- The Northern Plains, in the Middle of the Wasteland

Mercenary Chief: "Alright! Everybody! Listen up!"

Heavy marching.

Mercenary Chief: "We can't rely on those people we call our superiors. At this rate, this war will never begin, what a bunch of useless slobs! But we are different! They lack balls completely! These pansies need a push in the right direction!"

Ahahahaha!

Mercenary Chief: "But just because these guys have numbers, they think they can fight the Tripartite Union in the countryside. This is an extremely well-trained standing army drilled specially to fight Demon Hordes, high-quality Spearmen, and eagle-eyed Archers. We will descend upon their base camp like a strong wind and then flee as quickly as we can. The vanguard will be Spear Cavalry. Let's go!"

Mercenary Spear Cavalryman: "Leave it to us, Uncle!"

Mercenary Chief: "Alright, alright! Let's take them straight down! Do whatever you need to. Archer Cavalry!"

Mercenary Archer Cavalryman: "Yes!"

Mercenary Chief: "Use fire arrows. Set fire to their camp!"

Mercenary Archer Cavalryman: "Understood!"

Mercenary Chief: "Alright, all of you! I have no intention of prolonging this raid. Attack quickly and get out quickly. Once you hear the flute, you will retreat immediately. They might mobilise their entire force to come and deal with us. We will try to draw them out from behind their trenches and into the battleground. If we anger them enough, they'll chase us like a crazy ferret, and we'll lure them into a battle with the Central Continental people! It'll be a wild fight, and in a situation like that, with superior numbers, we'll surely win!"

Ahahahaha! You're amazing, Uncle!

You're the real Commander! The war begins now! Our Uncle!

Mercenary Chief: "This is definitely against the codes of chivalry, but if we don't do this, who knows what could happen. There will be noblemen and bishops who would say it's a bad thing we're doing here!"

Ha! That's definitely our Uncle!

Only our Uncle could come up with such a cunning plan!

Mercenary Chief: "You rotten swine! This isn't cunning! Gahahahaha! That's right. It's ingenuity! It's a battle tactic. It's what of the things you learn after accumulating years and years of battle experience! Move out!"

Yes! Yes! Haiya! Let's go!

Mercenary Cavalryman: "Cavalry, move out! — Hm? What's that?"

Mercenary Spear Cavalryman: "—! The enemy! We're under attack!"

----- The Northern Plains, in the Middle of the Wasteland

The Female Paladin: "Alright, let's hit them just like we agreed. Gentlemen! Show them the power of the warriors from the Southern United Kingdoms! Attack!"

Winter Knights: "Charge!!!"

Swords clashing, spears breaking, shields splintering.

Mercenary Cavalryman: "What?! Where did these guys come from!"

Mercenary Archer Cavalryman: "Aghhh!"

The Female Paladin: "Don't worry about the outcome! Retreat and swing right. Change to spears!"

Winter Knights: "Understood!"

Mercenary Cavalryman: "Wha-What's with this speed, they're turning! Behind us!"

Mercenary Spear Cavalryman: "No, to the right!"

Mercenary Archer Cavalryman: "Where, I can't see them!"

The Female Paladin: "Second attack, commence!"

Winter Knights: "Victory for the Commander!!!"

Mercenary Cavalryman: “Arghhh!”

Mercenary Spear Cavalryman: “What’s with this ferocity?! What monsters!”

Mercenary Chief: “Fools! The enemy is few! Break out of the encirclement! Spread out and push!”

The Female Paladin: “Move out! Reform the formation! Rendezvous at Number 16! Move straight to Formation Three!”

Winter Knights: “Retreat! The Commander has sounded the alarm!”

Winter Knights: “Alright! You’ll never catch us!”

Mercenary Chief: “Chase them down! The enemy are only three hundred! When we catch them, we can kill them all!”

Mercenary Spear Cavalryman: “Yes! Chase them!”

Mercenary Archer Cavalryman: “Capture that woman!”

Seneschal: “Formation Three!”

Mercenary Cavalryman: “?!”

Mercenary Spear Cavalryman: “What?”

Mercenary Chief: “What do you mean, chase them down!”

Mercenary Cavalryman: “Th-the enemy has split into two groups. Which one do we chase?”

Mercenary Chief: “They split into two even though there’s so few of them? Are they insane? That’s why women should not take part in wars! You take the group on the right! I’ll chase the ones on the left!”

Mercenary Cavalryman: “Yes!”

The Female Paladin: “Hmph, they’re chasing us. How adorable.”

Winter Knights: “Hahahahaha! Even though their horses aren’t in shape.”

The Female Paladin: "We'll be going soon!"

Winter Knights: "Understood!"

Mercenary Cavalryman: "What! They've split into two again?!"

Mercenary Sword Cavalryman: "What should we do? Which one do we chase?"

Mercenary Cavalryman: "—! What's up with them, we can even count their numbers now! Let's split up again! You take the forest route to the left! I'll take the one to the right!"

Mercenary Sword Cavalryman: "Understood! We'll meet ahead!"

Mercenary Cavalryman: "Girls sure are foolish!"

----- The Northern Plains, the Wasteland, Rendezvous Point No. 16

Horses stampeding.

Seneschal: "Which section is this?"

Winter Knight: "Section Eight. We've just formed up."

Messenger: "Sections form up! Report strength!"

The Female Paladin: "How is it?"

Seneschal: "Yes. All sections have formed. We've just received the report, there're few light injuries and broken bones, but it seems we've managed to extricate ourselves from a large casualty count."

The Female Paladin: "It's just the Second Attack. The enemy hasn't suffered many casualties either... What do you think of the enemy?"

Winter Knight: "Huh! We've led them fairly astray, so they're all very spread out."

The Female Paladin: "Right then! Are you all tired?!"

"No, ma'am! We're still in high spirits! Commander, let's go again!"

The Female Paladin: "Alright, take a while to catch your breaths. Let's begin the next attack. This time we'll go out as one unit. I'll take the lead."

"What—"

"How could you go out in such light equipment..."

"The Commander is still wearing her sister's habit, isn't she?"

"At least go to the middle section!"

"We'll do the fighting!"

The Female Paladin: "All who thinks like that can shut up!"

Winter Knights flinch in shock.

The Female Paladin: "We have no need for killing them! At most, try to get them off their horses! Killing the enemy is not our intention! They are also disciples of the Spirit of Light. In a different situation, we could have been comrades. Don't do anything drastic. As much as possible, don't kill anyone. If we can get them off their horses, we will take the victory in this battle. I learnt about this from the Hero... Ah, anyway, just take them down!"

Winter Knights: "Yes!"

The Female Paladin: "The enemy numbers are many, but they're all split up and each section is smaller than ours, maybe even half of ours. Attack them swiftly and strongly, take them off their horses and make them incapable of making further movements!"

Winter Knights: "Understood!"

Seneschal: "Shall we go?"

Winter Knights: "Ah."

Winter Knights: "Ohhh."

Seneschal: "...?"

The Female Paladin: "It's come."

Seneschal: "Reinforcements?"

The Female Paladin: "Yeah... the snow."

----- First Snow

Trudging through snow...

"Snow..."

"Yeah, it's snow."

"How can we fight like this..."

"The commanders have got to make a move now."

"What? ...Hmm."

"Assemble! Assemble! Riders of the Kingdom of Branches! Assemble at the Commander's Tent!"

"The Crown Prince Marshall has decreed! His most Benevolent and Gracious Excellency, in light of the deep snowfall and growing hunger faced by the Knights and Soldiers, a prudent course of action has been chosen! One company will remain as a garrison, but this Expedition is now postponed until the Spring!"

"Home!"

"We're going home!"

----- The Kingdom of Metal, Street of Guilds, on a Rooftop with the Moon
Reflected Clearly

Swords clashing.

One-Eyed Commander: "You think that's enough?! Then take this! Useless!
Useless! You're completely useless!!!"

Disciple Soldier: "Agh?!"

Little Maid Sister: "Oh no!"

Elder Maid Sister: "Disciple Soldier!!!"

Swords clashing.

One-Eyed Commander: "Can you keep your footing! Huh!!!"

Disciple Soldier: "—!"

Little Maid Sister: "?"

One-Eyed Commander: "Hahaha, I saw that."

Disciple Soldier: (If I retreat, the sisters will... I might as well just throw away my
shortsword...?!)

Swords clashing.

One-Eyed Commander: "You should just give up. You can't save everything."

Disciple Soldier: "What of it!!!"

Swords clashing.

One-Eyed Commander: "?!"

Disciple Soldier: "I will continue fighting! I will!" *Swords clashing.*

Disciple Soldier: "Even if there's just a 1% chance!!!" *Swords clashing.*

Disciple Soldier: "I will continue to fight! No matter what!!!" *Throws sword.*

One-Eyed Commander: "Agh! ...Damn you... You're just 20 years old, but...! You'll regret this... Arrogance..."

Disciple Soldier: "If I shall regret, I will cry when it comes. All kinds of things happen, whether they are unfair or not, but if I want to continue to call myself a commander... I will not retreat, here or ever!!!"

Final slash!!!

Elder Maid Sister: "Disciple Soldier..."

Little Maid Sister: "You're bleeding!"

Disciple Soldier: "Ahh... It's just a flesh wound."

Elder Maid Sister: "Sis, your wrists are bound."

Little Maid Sister: "Yeah."

Disciple Soldier: "...Living a life of envy is just useless and tiring. It's miserable. — To live like that is the equivalent of living in hell."

Elder Maid Sister: "..."

Disciple Soldier: "...We should go, the two of you as well. Today is an unbelievably cold day."

Little Maid Sister: "Yeah."

Elder Maid Sister: "Indeed... Oh?"

Disciple Soldier: "?"

Little Maid Sister: "Snow. It's snowing."

Elder Maid Sister: "Yeah, it's white... It's so white."

----- The Kingdom of Winter, Avenue of Ministries, in a Luxurious Hotel

Running down the corridor. Door slams open!

Shrewd Accountant: "Councilman!"

Young Merchant: "What is it?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Whatsh happened?"

Shrewd Accountant: "Man... You've been drinking heavily since the afternoon."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Itsh so cold, there's nothing elsh I can do."

Young Merchant: "You're just enjoying yourself."

Shrewd Accountant: "More importantly, it's snowing."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Snow..."

Young Merchant: "You've heard of it."

Fire Dragon Lady: "I saw some near the gate."

Young Merchant: "Has the Central Continent retreated?"

hrewd Accountant: "Yeah. The Central Continental Expeditionary Force appears to have retreated for the moment. Of course, they've begun constructing a few simple fortifications in the Plains and left a minimal number of soldiers to defend them. The vast majority of their army has returned to their homes, probably until the summer."

Young Merchant: "Just for the present."

Shrewd Accountant: "How now?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "..."

Young Merchant: "It seems even the sky has become an ally of the Southern United Kingdoms. If we want to expand our market, this is a good opportunity."

Shrewd Accountant nods.

Young Merchant: “With the new currency flowing from the heart of the Central Continent, they have already entered the process of self-destruction. They’ve also stepped up the minting of the currency. They’re probably using this as an emergency stop-gap measure. However, emergency measures are still emergency measures.

Fundamentally, this is about the poverty of the peasants. The confidence in the value of money has decreased. What is really needed are productive agricultural reforms to decrease dependence on war and seizing of territory. Simply increasing the amount of money...”

Shrewd Accountant: “You say the confidence has decreased?”

Young Merchant: “The Holy Church of the Spirit of Light, particularly in the Central Continent, enjoys an almost infinite amount of confidence and respect. They can do anything to anyone with no conditions, and hence they are over-confident in their own abilities.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “Then it ends here.”

Shrewd Accountant: “Huh?”

Fire Dragon Lady: “Isn’t this a war? In that case, we should stop unnecessary suffering.”

Shrewd Accountant: “But this situation isn’t the same.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “—

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:

A time to be born and a time to die,

A time to plant and a time to uproot,

A time to kill and a time to heal,

A time to tear down and a time to build,
A time to weep and a time to laugh,
A time to mourn and a time to dance,
A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
A time to search and a time to give up,
A time to keep and a time to throw away,
A time to tear and a time to mend,
A time to be silent and a time to speak,
A time to love and a time to hate,
A time for war and a time for peace.”

Young Merchant: “Is that... what you think?”

Fire Dragon Lady: “I think that while you may act purely like merchants, sometimes I can still see it. Like the brittleness of pure copper. You must regret your lack of emotion sometimes. That’s why you’ve come to this country, is it not? To make the final decision. That’s why I see.”

Young Merchant: “As you say, it is true that emotion is forbidden on the path of the merchant.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “It’s true that letting your emotions run away with you can be dangerous, but emotions can also become deadly weapons in the right hands.”

Young Merchant: “...”

Fire Dragon Lady: “You’ve made arrangements so that you can work with any party, haven’t you?”

Young Merchant: “...”

Fire Dragon Lady: "What a strong-willed individual."

Young Merchant: "Not strong-willed, just prudent."

Fire Dragon Lady: "I won't help you. I am the Hero's wife."

Young Merchant: "..."

Fire Dragon Lady: "I want salt, but these are different things."

Young Merchant: "You never relax, do you?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Of course. The flames of war really do fan far and wide. This is a war, but I have no intention of sacrificing my heart."

Young Merchant: "I understand. Shall we go save the Holy Church then?"

Shrewd Accountant: "...Save?"

Young Merchant: "For business interests. To begin with, this new currency system undermines competition. In this, we can also gain advantages. Rather than exploiting it all in one go, it would be better to reap business benefits steadily. That's what I've decided."

Shrewd Accountant: "Huh..."

Fire Dragon Lady: "You've turned it all inside out."

Young Merchant: "Get the Disciple Merchant to arrange an audience with the Lone Winter King."

Shrewd Accountant: "Yes."

Young Merchant: "Let's see just what these heroes from the South will say."

----- **Holy Imperial Capital, Octagonal Palace, in a Deep Room**

Expeditionary Nobleman: "Do you have anything to say?"

General of the Pale: "Hmph."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "And you call yourself the greatest Demonic force. You couldn't even overcome a frozen wasteland."

General of the Pale: "You say that but the elite Central Continental soldiers you're so proud of spent the entire campaign not fighting and then went home after exhausting all the supplies. Even when we landed at the rear of the Southern United Kingdoms, you still did not make a move. Were you planning to draw us into a trap?"

Expeditionary Nobleman: "What are you trying to say!"

Assassin: "Hehehehe."

General of the Pale: "And you still call yourselves a chivalric order."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "Damn you. You think I will take this humiliation lying down? Let us settle this with our swords right here, right now!"

Shadow Behind the Curtain: "..."

Bishop to the Imperial Court: "Gentlemen, no weapons will be drawn here today."

General of the Pale: "..."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "Fine."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Good. I have no intention for us to break our ties so early."

Bishop to the Imperial Court: "Indeed."

Crown Prince Marshal: "But considering the famine faced this winter, it might be difficult to reinforce our armies, after all, what if we get drawn into another winter? Among the Kings and noblemen of the land, there are many who are willing to turn their backs to a war with the Southern United Kingdoms."

General of the Pale: "Traitors? Just purge them then. You should not allow weak-willed defeatists willing to surrender even before the war begins come with us."

Assassin: "Hehehehehehe. As expected from a Demon General, all you can talk about is slaughter. How delicious."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Enough. — It's true that we weren't able to break the Southern United Kingdoms' Tripartite Union on the snowy plains and achieve our victory, but it cannot be said that we lost a great deal in this war. We still managed to preserve the vast majority of our officials, land, supplies, and soldiers. If you think about it, all we lost in this war were a few hundred mercenaries."

Bishop to the Imperial Court: "Indeed."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "Yes."

General of the Pale: "Hmph."

Crown Prince Marshal: "We have also verified that the sudden shock in price is due to the work of the Union. It was just a group of merchants who had taken advantage of the situation. We'll bring them back in line through bribery, lawsuits, and coercion, by the Church. The minting of the new currency is also progressing very well — is it not?"

Assassin: "Hehehehehehe... Indeed. From the Demon World, through the City of the Gate... We've managed to replenish our gold stocks."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Can we pay the soldiers with the new currency?"

Expeditionary Nobleman: "Yes."

General of the Pale: "This has nothing to do with us."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Our agreement with the Pale will be as it stands. It is a bit regrettable to us, but we will continue to give you land from the Southern United Kingdoms. You will be the only Demon Race to own land in the Human World."

General of the Pale: "Exactly. And we will continue to play our part as the Enemy of the Church. Of course, you will show us the appropriate restraint as well."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "...Cowards."

General of the Pale: "Kindly shut your mouth."

Assassin: "Hehehehehehe."

Bishop to the Imperial Court: "If you think about it, this is a pretty hefty price we're paying just to deal with some border guards from those useless Southern United Kingdoms. We should be able to just threaten them into submission."

General of the Pale: "Indeed. How rare."

Shadow Behind the Curtain: "...The Church is originally... one."

Bishop to the Imperial Court: "Indeed. Our Church was originally one Church, with one Bible, aiming to reach one spiritual peak. That's what we taught the people. We were the Church, firm and steadfast as a boulder. The faith of the people was stronger than the strongest steel."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "Then..."

Assassin: "Hehehehehehe."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Assemble the Third Holy Crusade."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "Yes!"

Crown Prince Marshal: "I don't just want noblemen this time. Sound the call for every able-bodied believer of the Faith to join the greatest Army in the world. With this Army, we will obliterate the Tripartite Union then march on the City of the Gate and bring the Demon King to his knees."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "How magnanimous..."

Assassin: "Hehehehehehehe."

General of the Pale: "Hehehe. That is a good state of affairs for us as well. If you kill the Demon King, we can begin the next Demon King Election earlier. My Lord holds this view as well."

Bishop to the Imperial Court: "And the next Demon King will be... Hehehe."

General of the Pale: "A Demon of the Pale."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "But how will we divide that expansive Demon World?"

Crown Prince Marshal: "Now that we have collaborators from the Demons, we can also request for detailed maps of the Demon World. But on top of that, hehe, I've got something you ought to see... Bring it here."

Servant: "I have it here, your Excellency." *Passes thing over.*

Expeditionary Nobleman: "What's that?"

General of the Pale: "What a strange rod of metal."

Crown Prince Marshal: "— It's a Musket. Hehehe. It's a device that allows even non-magical soldiers to fire off Medium-class Fireballs."

General of the Pale: "— Device?"

Crown Prince Marshal: "It uses black powder to generate force. Its greatest advantage is training time. To train one archer takes at least one year of military training. To train a mage capable of casting a Medium-class Fireball takes more than five years. But this musket is different. Using this, even a slave can be trained in just a week."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "What?!"

Crown Prince Marshal: "Hehehe. Well, this is a heretical technique. Metalsmiths in the Kingdom of Metal have been producing these since last year under the direction of that heretical woman, that Crimson Scholar."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "Is that so?"

Crown Prince Marshal: "If we succeed in mass production, the battlefield will change. There may be up to ten times more soldiers on every battlefield! Definitely to our advantage!"



Musket: Muskets were early firearms invented around the 15th century. The Tanegashima used in Japan during the Sengoku Era was a type of musket. Ignition methods were varied, including matchlock rifles like the Tanegashima or flintlock (sparks are produced from stones striking each other to ignite the gunpowder) ones, but all were known as muskets.

General of the Pale: "...So you're double-crossing."

Bishop to the Imperial Court: "This is not double-crossing. Since he is striving towards the Spirit of Light with a heart of righteousness, these new ideology and methods are endorsed by the love and blessings of the Spirit himself."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Let this winter be a blessing in disguise. We shall begin the mass production of muskets. Gather the craftsmen, let us construct a massive furnace in the palace! Everything must be conducted in absolute secrecy, even in the Demon World! Let us prepare for the Holy Crusade!"

Expeditionary Nobleman: "Spirit willing we shall."

Bishop to the Imperial Court: "All is as the Spirit wills."

Assassin: "Heheheheheehehe."

Shadow Behind the Curtain: "Listen... to me...."

Crown Prince Marshal: "..."

Bishop to the Imperial Court: "Please..."

Expeditionary Nobleman: "Holy Father..."

Crown Prince Marshal: "..."

Shadow Behind the Curtain: "Bring me... the key. The life of... the Demon King..."

Shadow Behind the Curtain: "And, my greatest regret... the City of the Gate..."

General of the Pale: "..."

Shadow Behind the Curtain: "The regret of... the Church."

Bishop to the Imperial Court: "Definitely! Definitely!"

Shadow Behind the Curtain: "Our thousand year... Ten thousand year..."

Assassin: "Hehehehehehehe!"

Shadow Behind the Curtain: "The remains of... the Spirit... of Light... must definitely... belong to us."



Holy Father: This is the highest mark of respect only given to the highest in the hierarchy of religious organisations. Only the Pope in Catholicism or the Dalai Lama in Tibetan Buddhism or some Chief Abbots in other forms of Buddhism are called by such a title.

----- The Palace of Winter, a Large Room, Strategy Committee

Young Merchant: "As this is our first meeting, I would like to offer my most sincere greetings. Lords and Kings of the Southern United Kingdoms, I am a merchant of the Union. We would like to purchase the Isle of Light from the jurisdiction of the Southern United Kingdoms."

Shrewd Accountant: "I am an accountant, acting as his aide."

Iron Fist King: "Hi."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "I am the Queen of the Kingdom of Snow. I hope to see you more in future."

Lone Winter King: "I cannot agree to this. We may be royalty, but we represent the Tripartite Union, and the liberated people of the land, and the land itself. Of course, we are willing to gamble our pride, our names, even our lives for the sake of our people. We are just caretakers of the land, with the title of 'King.'"

Disciple Merchant: (This is definitely the disposition of the King, there's not much we can do...)

Young Merchant: "I would be grateful if you were willing to listen to what I have to say in full. And, since I understand time is short, shall we move quickly to negotiations?"

Lone Winter King: "..."

Disciple Merchant nods.

Lone Winter King: "Please proceed, Young Merchant."

Young Merchant: "Firstly, we in the Union would like to purchase the entire national reserve stock of the Tripartite Union of potatoes. We would also like to purchase the entire production stock of the next summer."

Iron Fist King: "All of it...?!"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "It's an incredible amount. To transport it by ship would require at least ten ships."

Lone Winter King: "What do you intend to do with it?"

Young Merchant: "Sell it in the Central Continent."

Iron Fist King: "Don't you know that the potato has been designated as a heretical crop by the Church?"

Young Merchant: "The Central Continent is now experiencing shortage of food crops. To begin with, this shortage has many causes and problems that accompany it, but one of these is the reality that we may have to soon face widespread famine. In order to break this situation, we may need some very bitter medicine."

Lone Winter King: "So, potatoes?"

Young Merchant: "I do not believe a starving person will reject a potato."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "..."

Young Merchant: "Eating a potato is preferable to starving to death. People do not place reverence for minor details of their faith over the preservation of their lives. There will definitely be some fanatics, but these are not a majority, right?"

Lone Winter King: "But we definitely don't have enough potatoes to save the entire Central Continent..."

Young Merchant: "Please do not worry. We will continue to release wheat as long as we can control the high prices. The goal of the Union is definitely not to incite a famine."

Lone Winter King: "So you want the Tripartite Union to become your accomplices?"

Iron Fist King: "Hmm? What do you mean by accomplices?"

Young Merchant: "Well, the citizens of those countries who eat the potatoes will quickly understand for themselves just by the pure taste that potatoes are not demonic, poisonous fruits. As a result, more countries will develop favourable impressions towards the Tripartite Union. Of course we have our gains to make, but this is really a gesture of goodwill from the Union to the Tripartite Union."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "..."

Disciple Merchant: "Even so, this is favourable to us."

Young Merchant: "Of course it is. Then, I suppose there is room for negotiation?"

Lone Winter King: "What is the goal of the Union in doing this?"

Young Merchant: "..."

Lone Winter King: "If this is a trade secret of the Union, then I suppose I shouldn't ask, but..."

Disciple Merchant: "No, I'm afraid this is one of the issues of today's discussions."

Young Merchant: "Indeed, Your Majesty. Whether Your Majesties are aware of it or not, you know stand on the crossroads of history."

Lone Winter King: "..."

Young Merchant: "We now have the opportunity to seriously expand the Union. We have managed to put an end to this war without shedding any blood. With the threat of famine on the Central Continent, their economy is facing extreme uncertainty and has ground to a halt. Also, there is the issue of the schism of the Church and the emancipation of the serfs."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "And these are the crossroads?"

Disciple Merchant: (These aren't the crossroads. This is the path that leads to the crossroads, creating the circumstances under which we have to choose...)

Young Merchant: "...You have already begun to receive many propositions, have you not? To reduce tariffs for a single nation or to agree to a secret military alliance, things like that?"

Lone Winter King: "I'm afraid I cannot answer."

Young Merchant: "Up till now, there has only been one state of affairs, where the Holy Empire = The Holy Church of Light. Of course, all the other countries and lords are still relevant, but one could say that the Central Continent is ruled either directly or indirectly by them. The situation is such that while they govern the people, there are none who govern the Church. Moreover, the Church has practically amalgamated with the Church, purging elements who would oppose it. These are the conditions under which the Tripartite Union has emerged, with a military might distinct from the Holy Empire and a religious system distinct from the Holy Church, essentially through a union with the Order. This is something unprecedented in the annals of history. While the scale may be relatively small, this is surely a new opportunity."

...But this opportunity is wrapped up in both political and economic considerations. To use mercantile terminology, this is a new market. The Tripartite Union is a rapidly growing region constantly devising new strategies and constantly reforming and reinventing its agricultural sector. With more countries in the Central Continent shifting allegiances, the Holy Empire and the Holy Church are quickly becoming powerless to prevent the growth of the Tripartite Union."

Iron Fist King: "So you want to take us all down together?!"

Young Merchant: "What?"

Disciple Merchant: "...No, that's not it, your Majesty. He's a merchant. If he really took us all down, he would have nobody to do business with. What he is concerned with, to the end, is profit."

Young Merchant: "Indeed... The narrow situation of only having one country to do business with is undesirable. If there were two different powers, then the scale of the business would also increase, wouldn't it?"

Iron Fist King: "That's the real question?"

Lone Winter King: (Many countries in the Central Continent are hanging back and taking the middle ground so as not to be drawn into conflict. We've been hoping to use that to find a way to end the war. But, if it is as he says, this might be able to expedite the process. But...)

Lone Winter King: "Merchant... I understand what you have been trying to say thus far. So what price are you willing to pay?"

Young Merchant: "First, with regards to potatoes, we would like to exchange for either 0.7 times the weight in wheat or 1.55 times the weight in barley. What do you think?"

Lone Winter King thinks.

Disciple Merchant: "That would seem to be... acceptable."

Young Merchant: "Next, about the proposal to improve your Economic Institutions, this is just advice, so it's free."

Iron Fist King: "Nothing costs as much as what is given to us."

Young Merchant: "...Yes, there is such a saying. Someone taught me this method anyway. Hahaha. In this situation, rather than selling ideologies, one could say we are selling perspectives. I carry with me an objective, an outsider's perspective.

"The Union would like to establish a new institution for trade and extension of influence. Just by being able to extend our business influence, we will already be able to reap large benefits. That's why it is profitable to extend this proposal, even for free. To begin with, we hope to receive permission to establish a Chambers of Commerce and a Bank. The Chambers of Commerce must be in a central location. This will be the base of operations for the Union."

Lone Winter King: "Hmm, a bank, huh?"

Disciple Merchant: "Your Majesty..."

Young Merchant: "Is something wrong?"

Lone Winter King: "Well, both I and the country are in the same state. We're poor. If I wanted to initiate a project using money from my own purse, would this bank be able to support me? Merchant, would you be able to call this a joint economy?"

Young Merchant: "What sort of project?"

Lone Winter King: "With permission, I would like to establish a Branch of the Holy Order of the Lake in every country."

Young Merchant: "That is indeed very important. In order to combat the activities of the Church, setting up more Headquarters will be beneficial to spreading the ideologies and teachings. But it would be difficult to say whether or not the Order will consider this a worthwhile investment. Even though I hear that they're a charitable organisation."

Lone Winter King: "No, I would like for the Order to treat smallpox from these Branches."

Shrewd Accountant: "What?!"

Young Merchant: "...Is this the truth?"

Lone Winter King: "Yes."

Young Merchant: "Is it her?"

Lone Winter King: "...Someone like her."

Young Merchant: "I understand. The Union will also provide 2,000,000 gold pieces to support this project."

Shrewd Accountant: "If this is true... It is indeed a miracle."

Young Merchant: "Why haven't I heard..."

Disciple Merchant: "We have been keeping very silent about this, we don't want it to be too widespread."

Young Merchant: "Of course I understand this. As merchants, we would also try our best to guard such an important trade secret. But I'm shocked."

Lone Winter King: "You've met the Crimson Scholar?"

Young Merchant: "Yes. We didn't have many opportunities, but that beautiful person isn't just a pretty face, she is also a highly intelligent and prudent soul who clearly understands the ways of the world."

Lone Winter King: "Indeed. That is the Crimson Scholar."

Young Merchant: "—"

Shrewd Accountant: "?"

Young Merchant: "What of it?"

Lone Winter King: "That person really lives an impression... No, it's almost like she plants seeds in the hearts of the people she meets. I can feel the shoots of those seeds growing within you merchants."

Disciple Merchant: (...I can't say I disagree.)

Young Merchant: "You seem to understand this very well. However, I am a merchant. I will not back down on business. Is that alright, sir?"

Lone Winter King: "Fine."

Young Merchant: "Then, allow me to bring up the second and last point of today's discussions."

Lone Winter King: "Let's—"

Young Merchant: "We would like to arrange for an early resolution agreement to the war between the Union, the Tripartite Union and the Demons — or at least a faction of the Demons."

Iron Fist King: "What?!" *Clenches iron fists.*

Young Merchant: "Please calm down."

Lone Winter King: "..."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "We'll hear you out first."

Young Merchant: "I hope to conduct trade between the Union and the Demons. This isn't a small scuffle or anything, a full blown war will be very non-conducive for business."

Iron Fist King: "Your counterparts are Demons?! Can business be done like that?"

Young Merchant: "It can."

Iron Fist King: "How dare you?!"

Young Merchant: "Please do not be mistaken. You are not the only people whose lives are on the line. I have brought material for our negotiations today — data, money, reports, credit. These are all the results of merchants in the Union risking their lives. I represent them. You could say I currently enjoy the position of a Commander of the Union."

"And because of that, I say that business can be done. These are the voices of all the merchants in the union. You ask me how I dare? I'll demonstrate to you just how. Because I am me. Because I am a merchant. Because I am willing to put my life on the line."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Heh."

Disciple Merchant: "...Your Majesties. On this matter, I am definitely on the Young Merchant's side."

Assistant: "Eh?"

Disciple Merchant: "No, I am no more than a humble servant to Your Majesties. But I come from a family of merchants. A merchant is one who is more than willing to continuously make voyages and trips."

He has to leave his familiar territories to head from village to village, from country to country, buying and selling goods along the way. There are neither enemies nor allies, just things which must be done. A merchant decides what he needs to do and then does it, all by himself.

“To the Young Merchant, all of this is just a situation of, ‘There may be a war going on, but these countries have special produce. Oh, wait. If there wasn’t a war on, we could trade it to that place.’ That’s why he’s willing to do so much to make such an effort, using the lives of the farmers of the Central Continent as a shield in order to put an end to the war. I can sympathise with his intentions.”

Young Merchant: “...”

Shrewd Accountant: “...”

Disciple Merchant: “Well, umm. Bring the calculations!”

Assistant: “Yes!” *Brings graphs.*

Disciple Merchant: “The real problem is that it is essentially impossible to maintain this conflict and confrontation both with the Central Continent and the anti-Demon defensive line and border perimeter, right? Because the Holy Empire came out with the Declaration of War, we could slowly persuade the Demons or at least bring them to a central position so that it wouldn’t be a large problem to at least lengthen the duration of the current ceasefire.

According to calculations, by trading with the Demons along the structure as proposed by the Union, the Tripartite Union stands to gain a 36% increase in tariffs alongside other taxes and port charges. Also, if concrete peace with Demonkind can be achieved, troops currently used to guard the border can be reassigned to more productive places.”

Shrewd Accountant: (*small voice*) “...Good job, using both head and heart to win them over.”

Iron Fist King: “...”

Queen of Ice and Snow: "How will we gain the approval of the people?"

Disciple Merchant: "To our Kingdoms, which have been seriously battling Demonkind, I think we should consider this seriously. Are Demons really monsters which seek to corrupt and destroy human society? I... apologise to all those who have died so far in the wars against the Demons, but the Demons I met on the field are much less like the kind of Demons the Church would have us believe, and much more like normal human beings."

Lone Winter King: "This matter bears far too much weight for me to make a speedy decision, I'm sorry."

Young Merchant: "That's..."

Lone Winter King: "However, I will send an investigation team to the Demon World."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Investigation team?"

Lone Winter King: "I would also like to find out more. We know far too little about the Demon World. Why is that? We've sent two Holy Crusades into it, with at least 10,000 humans entering it as well. Shouldn't we have heard more about its culture or produce, or at least about the scenery there? But why is that all we hear about it is its nightmare of a wasteland and its terrible battleground. I feel that there's something amiss here."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Now that you say it..."

Lone Winter King: "I can only reply you as such for now, I apologise."

Young Merchant: "No, it's enough."

Shrewd Accountant: "Councillor..."

Lone Winter King: "It appears the two worlds are beginning to draw closer. I can feel it..."

----- City of the Gate, the Godless Temple, the Deepest Section

Footsteps echo in the empty halls.

The Mage: “...”

The Mage: “...Here?”

Star Sparrow: “*Chirp, chirp, chirp.* What’s wrong?”

The Mage: “...”

The Mage: “...I see it.”

The Mage: “...Don’t let it out of your sight... Here.”

The Mage: “...”

Star Sparrow: “Wh-what? This is... What a powerful presence... What strange magic.”

The Mage: “Secret Pillar Magic. It’s ancient... No, this is divine Demon magic...”

Star Sparrow: “What do you mean. *Chirp?*! This is... water? No, it’s liquid magic?!”

The Mage: “...As I thought.”

Star Sparrow: “What do you mean as you thought?!”

The Mage: “...Since the day I opened my eyes, I knew I was fake of something. I could never deny this no matter how hard I tried. I hoped to escape to this place so that I could become the original of myself.

...I don’t know how a calculative person would act, but while I exist, I will move forward. — You and the Hero aren’t bad people. But I want to be myself, not a fake. Since I became a Redundant String, falling into this nightmare, I’ve been lonely, and wishing to return to my correct dream... To my correct spare.”

----- The Demon King Castle, Front Yard, the Courtyard of Unforgettable Doom

The Demon King: "My comrades! My people!"

Ohhhhhh! Demon King! Demon King!

The Hero: "What's this? Didn't you say you were really unpopular?"

The Demon King: "The previous Demon Kings were very unpopular. They gained their so-called respect by dominating the Demon World with force and military might. If the previous Demon Kings did such a populist thing like inviting this many people to the square to talk and hold a rally, most of the Demon World would probably vomit blood and die from shock."

The Demon King: "I apologise for my long absence! Thank you for the concern you have shown me. I know there have been many rumours and guesses as to my absence, but be assured that I am fully recuperated and ready to lead!"

Ohhhhhh! Demon King! Demon King! Glory to the Demon King!

The Demon King: (*small voice*) "Chief Maid."

The Chief Maid: (*small voice*) "Yes, Your Majesty?"

The Demon King: (*small voice*) "I might as well be wearing nothing if I'm wearing this."

The Chief Maid: (*small voice*) "It's not that bad."

The Demon King: (*small voice*) "My boobs are spilling out."

The Hero: "Well, at least everyone's staring at you."

The Chief Maid: "Since you're a female Demon King, we'll take advantage of that and make them all drool."

The Hero: "Promise?"

The Chief Maid: "Promise."

The Demon King: "My people! I am glad for the end to these days of anguish... for I have returned. To the Demon World!"

The Hero: "Wow, I didn't think she'd be this popular. The people almost look like they're going to cry."



Redundant String: A series of commands in-built into digital or mechanical systems which do not usually serve any purpose. However, in times of crisis or when something is deemed to be broken, this will kick in to ensure that the system can continue functioning and that no further damage will occur.

The Chief Maid: "You'll soon have your chance to demonstrate your appeal."

Ohhh! Demon King! Demon King!

The Demon King: "I know what has happened while I have been convalescing. Firstly, we have managed to reclaim one of the holy lands which the Humans have unlawfully seized from us, the City of the Gate, and I am happy for that. The City will remain under my personal control and direct protection."

The Chief Maid: "And the next matter is..."

The Demon King: "While I have been away, there have been those who have begun waving the flag of rebellion, thinking that they could break free from the laws of the land which govern over them. However, my loyal and capable sword of justice, the Black Knight has purged these impure elements!"

The Chief Maid: "This is the part where you step out and say something fierce."

The Hero: "Eh?" Waves. "Like that?"

The Chief Maid: "Do something impressive, something fierce!"

The Hero: "Hmm. What should I... Aha! Titan-class Grand Destruction Plasma Annihilator!!"

Magic swirls through the air ... Searing heat and massive explosions... Bricks falling all around.

The tower was... in the blink of an eye?!

...What the hell?!

The Demon King: "...Witness the power of my Black Knight!"

The Chief Maid: "Nice ad-lib follow!" (*TL Note: she said this in English.*)

Ohhhhh! Amazing! The Black Knight is amazing! Wonderful!

Demon King! Demon King! Demon King! Demon King!

The Hero: (Oh no, I think I went a bit overboard.)

The Demon King: "Today I have something to tell you. Loyal comrades, my people! We first made contact with the humans 20 years ago. Their power and attitudes are now something we know very well. But today, today we stand on the crossroads of history!"

Demon King! Demon King! Demon King! Demon King!

The Demon King: "Today!"

Silence.

The Demon King: “Today, I declare the mustering of the Great Demon Conference, the Kurultai!”

Demon King! Demon King! Demon King!

Finally this day has come!

We're going to go all out on these Humans! It'll be our great and utter victory!

The Demon King: “Uhh, wait, no—“

Demon King! Demon King! Long live the King! Long live the King!

The Demon King: “...Umm, all will be decided at the Kurultai! Spread the word to the farthest corners of the world! The Demon King calls!”



Kurultai: This refers to the Assembly of Khans as used to be conducted under the Mongol Empire and its descendants in the Golden Horde and Ilkhanate, under which important nobility and military figures would gather for a conference. In the Demon World, a Kurultai was convened to enact important new laws or to strategise for a war. To Demonkind, it would have been an extremely important event.

----- Omake!

That sounds like a great name
for an establishment. <3



The Demon King
Hotsprings Villa.

Volume 2 Chapter 6, “Your Lap feels good, Hero.”

----- The Village of Wintering, a Morning in Deep Winter, the Entrance to the Village

Thin Villager: “Hoi!”

Middle-Aged Villager: “What’s the situation?”

Thin Villager: “It’s cold today too.”

Middle-Aged Villager: “Yeah, it’s freezing. Where are you going?”

Thin Villager: “I’m carrying pork to the shed.”

Middle-Aged Villager: “I’m going to go cut out some ice...”

Thin Villager: “?”

Middle-Aged Villager: “Hey! Hey!”

Thin Villager: “Oh, isn’t it the Scholar! I’d heard you’d gone to the city, but why have you returned to the village?!”

Middle-Aged Villager: “Hey! Scholar!”

The Demon King shivers.

The Hero: “Stop shivering.”

Both walk off.

Thin Villager: “Welcome back! Scholar!”

Middle-Aged Villager: “Welcome back!”

The Demon King: “Yeah. I’m back.” *Smiles.*

----- The Village of Wintering, the Manor of the Demon King, in a Warm Room

Elder Sister Maid: "I apologise, Mistress."

The Demon King: "I already said it's fine, didn't I?"

Elder Sister Maid: "But I borrowed your form and did something like that, with such a big impact, I've probably messed up all of the Mistress's plans."

The Demon King: "On the contrary, had you allowed yourself to get killed and become a spirit, I wouldn't have a home to go back to. I know that your spirit would try its best, but a spirit is still a spirit."

Elder Sister Maid: "Y-yes..."

The Demon King: "I've heard all about it from the Hero on the way back. Don't worry."

Elder Sister Maid: "Y-yes..."

The Demon King: "Has anything else happened in this time? Is everything okay? Are you hurt? Have you been going hungry?"

The Hero: "Nope, I've kept everything good."

Elder Sister Maid: "Nope, everyone has been really nice to us."

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah! Yeah! They even taught us the cuisine of the Kingdom of Metal!"

The Demon King: "Really? I'm looking forward to it then."

The Hero: "Heh. What's it like... the cuisine of the Kingdom of Metal?"

Little Sister Maid: "Things like Pirate Soup or Roasted Suckling Pig."

The Hero: "That sounds extravagant."

Little Sister Maid: "It has a strong flavour and tastes incredibly delicious."

The Hero: "Ohh, I can sort of taste it."

Chapter 6

The Chief Maid: "So there were no problems around the house with the Mistress gone?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Because the house has been empty, there hasn't been very much to do. We've been helping the villagers clean their homes and sweep the snow. Since you came back yesterday, we've started doing some large-scale spring cleaning. We hope to bring everything back to the same state as it was yesterday."

Little Sister Maid: "I tried my best too!"

The Chief Maid: "What did you do?"

Little Sister Maid: "I washed all the sheets! And I scrubbed all the linen!"

The Chief Maid: "Fine. You get some points."

Elder Sister Maid: "Then, I'll get back to cleaning the place."

Little Sister Maid: "Eh? But I wanted to talk..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Back to cleaning. We can talk over dinner. If we stand here and talk all day, you're going to end up hibernating soon, aren't you?"

Little Sister Maid: "Uhh—"

Elder Sister Maid: "Alright, let's go."

Little Sister Maid: "See you soon, Mistress!"

The Chief Maid: "Alright, Your Majesty. I've got to clean up the manor and run some other errands, I've got a lot of chores to do."

The Demon King: "Mmm, I'm counting on you."

The Hero: "Thank you."

The Chief Maid: "Oh, that's right."

The Demon King: "What?"

The Chief Maid: "I'm not sure if there're still parts of the house which are dirty. I haven't finished checking so, though it's a bit inconvenient, try not to move around too much. You can stay in the Maids' Quarters until nighttime."

The Demon King: "Yeah, good job."

The Hero: "It's just cleaning though, we won't die from dirt."

The Chief Maid: "If you walk around the house while it's still dirty, you increase the amount of cleaning I have to do. Especially you, Hero, you don't care about any of these things."

----- The Village of Wintering, the Manor of the Demon King, in a Warm Room

The Hero: "The Chief Maid is way too neurotic—"

The Demon King: "Hehehe. Just listen to her for now."

The Hero: "?"

The Demon King: "She just wants us to rest for a bit."

The Hero: "Yeah, I guess... Let's relax."

The Demon King: "That's the spirit."

Snuggles.

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "..."

Snuggles.

The Hero: "So, tell me about this Quriltai."

The Demon King: "You mean the Kurultai. It's a gathering of the Chiefs of the various races in the Demon World. A really important conference."

The Hero: "Is it alright for you to come back here?"

The Demon King: "After I officially announced it, it'll still take a month for the delegates to be gathered. Messengers have been sent to every corner of the Kingdom and preparations are being made as we speak. The Kurultai is such a massive gathering, it is almost unheard of for a Demon King to have two Kurultais in his lifetime. Many Demon Kings spend their entire time on the throne without organising even one Kurultai."

The Hero: "Hmmm."

The Demon King: "The conference will only consist of the Chiefs, but not just the Chiefs will be gathered. Their attendants and retinues will come as well. The markets will be buzzing with trade deals and negotiations. There will even be young men who will come to try to impress people with their martial skills and hope to get recruited to some elite squad or another. It is said that those who are born while a Kurultai is taking place are blessed with bright futures. There will also be lots of banquets. If you put all the banquets back to back, you could probably eat for a month."

The Hero: "Heh. It sounds more like a festival than a conference."

The Demon King: "There will be many strong-willed Demon Races. The Races tend to be powerful like the Dragon Race but most of the time, they shut their borders and try continuing to live in isolation from everyone else. The Fang Race lives as hunters in the mountainous wilderness and barely interacts with anyone. For this purpose, the Kurultai is also an opportunity to make contact with those Demon Races who have not had communication with the rest of the world for some time."

The Hero: "I guess there's no place for a human there."

The Demon King: "Indeed."

The Hero: "At least not at this conference."

The Demon King: "It's not yet time to repair the relations between Demon and Human."

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "Don't worry, it will come eventually. For this purpose, this manor and this world on the surface are being filled with research material and reinforcements."

The Hero: "I see."

Candlelights sway in the breeze.

The Demon King: "... ..."

The Hero: "What's wrong?"

The Demon King: "No. It's warm, I'm kinda nervous."

The Hero: "Are you tired?"

The Demon King: "I guess."

The Hero: "When you're nervous, it's very easy to forget that you're feeling tired."

The Demon King: "Is that so?"

The Hero: "Especially so after a climactic. You enter a state in which you're not even sure what's going on anymore. There was once a time, after a battle, when I had jumped into the sea and swam while laughing and smiling for eight hours. When I got back to the shore, I immediately fell asleep and only woke up two days later."

The Demon King: "That probably only happens to you."

The Hero: "Hmm. Will you sleep?"

The Demon King: "No, I'm not feeling sleepy. Just lethargic."

The Hero: "I see... Umm."

The Demon King: "?"

The Hero: "The floor isn't soft at all, so you shouldn't rest there. Would you like to use my lap?"

The Demon King: "Can I?"

The Hero: "Please do."

----- *The Cheerful Murders Incident No. 5*

"Stop right there!"

"Get your hands...!"

"Who the hell are you guys?!"

Two shadows danced in the cold and frozen moonlight. One was a young lady's with long brown hair who appeared to still be a child, yet she had the fire of life burning in her eyes.

Though she were young, there was a sort of pitiful beauty emanating from her that suggested she could become something in the future. However, what did not match this appearance was her full and large breasts behind her thin clothing. A frilly miniskirt rested snugly upon her loveable waist, giving way to knee socks which hugged her healthy thighs as they bounded strongly across the land.

"I am the Cheerful Swordsman!"

A cute youth stood by her side, watching her tenderly. His delicate, prepubescent body was visible beneath the thin shirt he wore while his half-length shorts revealed his thin and smooth legs. The boy was not ashamed of the circumstances and from within his small body, he hollered out to the strange black shadow.

"I am the Cheerful Philosopher!"

The two of them breathed together and gripped each other's hands, the light shone from them, flowing like a river, dancing like small, shiny beans. Explosions sounded off almost musically, while seven-coloured bright lights illuminated the warehouse, burning the retinas of the group of strange things which resembled bats.

"We did it!"

"We did."

The two spun around with their weapons and disappeared.

"Purging the enemy with extreme prejudice without even finding out if they were actually bad! What stubborn, naïve youngsters! This is going to be known as the 'Cheerful Murders'! To think it was committed just 170 seconds ago!"

----- The Village of Wintering, the Demon King's Manor, in a Warm Room

The Demon King: "—♪"

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "Your lap feels good, Hero."

The Hero: "Oh? That's good. You can sleep even though you're not sleepy?"

The Demon King: "You're about to make me."

The Hero: "?"

The Demon King: "What are you reading?"

The Hero: "A new novel."

The Demon King: "Huh?"

The Hero: "Yeah, I'm at Volume 5. This is *The Cheerful Murders Incident No. 5—The Case of the Triple Murders at the Hot Springs.*"

The Demon King: "I don't understand."

The Hero: "Actually, neither do I."

The Demon King: "Why are you reading something you don't understand?"

The Hero: "A friend of mine wrote it."

The Demon King: "Oh?"

The Hero: "The Mage."

The Demon King: "Is that so? She has such a hobby?"

The Hero: "Yup — Ah! This is a secret though! Don't tell anyone."

The Demon King: "I understand... But even if I know, it's not like I could tell anyone."

The Hero: "Shall I lend it to you? If you start from Volume 1, we can read together."

The Demon King: "Yay, yay, yay! Let me read!"

The Hero: "Here, it's really interesting, even though I don't understand it."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "..."

Fireplace flames lick the air.

The Demon King: "Heh... I really don't like the Lord of Apples."

The Hero: "He's so annoying, right!"

Pages flipping.

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "...Hoho."

Pages flipping.

The Demon King: “Eh!? He filled the stomach with turnip juice...? What kind of depraved cruelty is this? Is the author for real?!”

The Hero: “...Well, since she’s writing it, it’s all kind of like that.”

Fireplace flames lick the air.

The Demon King: “Hmmm.”

The Hero: “How was it?”

The Demon King: “I didn’t understand it, but it was very interesting.”

The Hero: “It was interesting, so I read it to the end, but they still didn’t solve the mystery.”

The Demon King: “It’s quite a new experience.”

The Hero: “Very rare for a mystery novel.”

The Demon King: “Hmm, I’ve got it. The youth has a secret killing technique hidden in those shorts he’s wearing.”

The Hero: “...Uhh, I think that’s a bit too farfetched.”

The Demon King: “Then what do you think?”

The Hero: “Didn’t she spend sixty pages describing how the villagers turned into zombies along the roadside?”

The Demon King: “That’s scary.”

The Hero: “Really.”

The Demon King: “...”

The Hero: “...”

The Demon King: "I never thought there would be a day where I could just lie here on your lap and read books with you for an entire day."

The Hero: "Neither did I, with you."

The Demon King: "It's very warm in your lap."

The Hero: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "...I've spent very long times reading books on my own. Researching and studying too. That's what my Race is most adept at doing. We're bad at the simplest of things, but with a book in our hands, we can read forever, just wondering about things in solitude. What is the Human World like? What kind of guy is the Hero? — But I never thought about how warm your lap would be."

The Hero: "There's no need to treat it like some kind of rare treasure."

The Demon King: "Eh?"

The Hero: "If it's my lap, you can have it any time."

The Demon King: "Ahh. Ahh— Yeah. That's true."

The Hero: "Let's just relax for today."

----- The Village of Wintering, the Manor of the Demon King, Food Hall

Little Sister Maid: "Tada! Today's a feast!"

The Demon King: "Wow! It looks delicious!"

The Hero: "Even though the manor is empty, you really went out of your way."

The Chief Maid: "Yeah, a few villagers and the Village Chief have come as well. It seems they're here to offer you their blessings on your return."

The Demon King: "Yeah, thank you. They didn't have to do that, though."

The Hero: "Yeah."

The Chief Maid: "Then, I'll serve..."

The Demon King: "Yeah. Sure. Is it alright if I serve everything at the same time? We can all eat together!"

The Hero: "Yeah!"

The Chief Maid: "But..."

The Demon King: "This can't be a regular thing. It's got to be just for today. Please forgive me, Chief Maid."

The Chief Maid: "Huh... The job of a Maid is to fulfil the wishes of her mistress..."

The Demon King: "Then, let's eat!"

The Hero: "Let's eat!"

The Chief Maid: "You've baked bread as well."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes." *Smiles.*

Little Sister Maid: "Today's bread is baked with raisins. Ah, Hero. I'll set the table."

The Hero: "It's fine. Take a break every now and then. Let me get the soup at least."

Little Sister Maid: "That's wrong. This is my job. Preparing the meal, serving it to the table, watching everyone say 'Delicious ~♪'. Even though that's my job, nothing makes me happier. Until the end, I am a chef."

The Demon King: "That's right, the Little Maid Sister's work is her own reward, isn't it?"

The Hero: "Is that so? I understand. I'll leave you to it then."

Little Sister Maid: "Yup~♪ "

The Hero: "..."

Little Sister Maid: "How is it?"

The Hero: "Delicious. The bacon and potatoes are great too."

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah~♪"

The Chief Maid: "Ahem."

Little Sister Maid: "Yes!"

The Chief Maid: "Don't shake when you carry the food."

Little Sister Maid: "I'm sorry!"

The Chief Maid: "But hold the food up high."

Little Sister Maid: "Y-yes!"

The Hero: "— She's got them looking so prim and proper."

The Demon King: "Hmm, the Chief Maid has got them well-controlled."

The Chief Maid: "Do your best."

Little Sister Maid: "Yes~♪"

The Hero: "Delicious."

The Demon King: "Yeah, this clam tastes great with butter too."

The Chief Maid (*small voice*): "On another note, Your Majesty."

The Demon King: "What is it?"

The Chief Maid (*small voice*): "How was it?"

The Demon King: "What?"

The Chief Maid (*small voice*): "Your private time together."

The Demon King: "Yeah, it was fun. We took it nice, slow and easy."

The Chief Maid (*small voice*): "Oh my, what a virgin. Then did you hug?"

The Demon King: “We were both enthralled by two volumes of a powerful weapon...”

The Chief Maid (*small voice*): “What?”

The Demon King: “‘The Waste of Talent?’ ...No, ‘The Talent of Wastage’. I’m not sure what the reviews for it are like, but it was definitely intriguing.”

The Chief Maid (*small voice*): “What are you saying...”

The Demon King: “No, it was ‘The Cheerful Murders.’ The Hero introduced me to some new novels and we spent the whole time just reading them. It was really interesting.”

The Chief Maid (*small voice*): “The whole time?”

The Demon King: “Yeah, the whole time.”

The Chief Maid: “...”

The Demon King: “?”

The Chief Maid: “Hero?”

The Hero: “Mm? What is it, Chief Maid?”

The Chief Maid: “The Demon King would like you to wash her back tonight at the hot springs.”

The Hero & the Demon King: “?!”

Elder Sister Maid: “Eh, wha, wha—”

Little Sister Maid: “Bathing together? How nice～”

Elder Sister Maid: “We’re good on this end.”

The Hero: “What are you talking about?!”

The Demon King: “Why are you so angry? Is it a bad thing?”

The Chief Maid: "Dammit, don't you understand that time is limited?"

The Hero: "This kind of thing needs to be seriously considered beforehand."

The Demon King: "That's right. Something like this needs the correct mood and timing."

The Chief Maid: "You don't listen to anything I say... Fine then. I'll wash the Hero's back."

Little Sister Maid: "Wh-what? I think I'll plug my ears with my fingers and try not to listen."

Elder Sister Maid: "We are far too young to deal with this, let's just keep quiet."

The Hero: "To have my back washed by the Chief Maid..."

The Demon King: "What are you imagining, Hero? I won't allow anything of the sort."

Door opens.

The Female Paladin: "Hmph. Why does it always get like this every time?"

The Hero: "When the—"

The Female Paladin: "I heard everything. I've finally come to visit, but now I've walked into some kind of warzone again."

The Demon King: "Oh, it's the Female Paladin! You've come back safely, then. Well, sit down. Little Maid Sister, prepare another portion please."

Little Sister Maid: "Yes!"

The Hero: "Well, in any case, let's leave the bath thing alone."

The Demon King: "Mmm. We'll stop for an hour."

The Chief Maid: "I understand this isn't a two-man thing anymore, it looks like it's becoming a three-person thing."

The Hero: "Is that what the problem is?!"

The Chief Maid: "It is the responsibility of a maid to prepare the harem of her mistress."

The Hero: "Are you for real?"

The Demon King: "The Way of the Maid is indeed very strange and complex."

The Female Paladin: "It's great that you've come back safely... Here's some wine we produce in the Holy Order. Well, we try to drink it in moderation."

The Chief Maid: "Thank you very much."

The Demon King: "My words are simple, but do listen. In order to ensure that for both sides to suffer as little as we can possibly manage in this war, we shouldn't be afraid to use whatever measures we can bring to bear."

The Female Paladin: "The enemy are 20,000 whereas we are but a quarter of that. No matter how many skills I can use, we're still going to die. Since it's that way, I'm troubled too."

The Hero: "Sorry for making you come all the way here. I was intending to visit you tomorrow."

The Female Paladin: "I was the one who could not wait, so don't worry about it — Welcome back, Hero. Welcome back, Demon King."

----- The Village of Wintering, the Manor of the Demon King, the Study at Night

The Demon King: "Phew... I can finally settle down. I should probably write a paragraph for the records. Hmm, that's right. I haven't received the soil samples I requested for. I should probably show my face at the house of the Village Chief... Eh? Where's the packaging I need..."

Knock knock.

The Demon King: "It's open, come in—"

The Female Paladin: "Are you free to talk now?"

The Demon King: "Ahh, it's the Female Paladin. I'm sorry, dinner was very rowdy."

The Female Paladin: "No, it was fun. Dinner at the order is usually a silent, religious affair. It felt good to eat at such a fun dinner."

The Demon King: "That's good to hear."

The Female Paladin: "Yes."

The Demon King: "..."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Demon King: "What's up?"

The Female Paladin: "Ahh, yes— There's something I would like to talk to you about."

The Demon King: "Yeah?"

The Female Paladin: "While you were not around—"

The Demon King: "Yeah?"

The Female Paladin: "I gave my sword to the Hero."

The Demon King: "...?"

The Female Paladin: "Don't you know? That's... to a Paladin, one's sword is the most important thing... It's like a ceremonial pledge, to say that I will forever follow that person."

The Demon King: "Mmhmm."

The Female Paladin: "When a Paladin has a Lord— when the Paladin offers his sword to his Lord, that person gains jurisdiction over the paladin. To offer one's sword is the ultimate form of subordination, expressing a desire to work for the

Lord, to take up arms and the banner of war when the Lord demands it. Whatever is the Lord's will, the Paladin will deliver... One could say the Paladin becomes the belonging of the Lord."

Awkward silence.

The Female Paladin: "That's the kind of pact I have with the Hero."

The Demon King: "..."

The Female Paladin: "I'm ashamed that I went behind your back and did this without obtaining your permission. I understand. But I don't think I forced the Hero to do anything... I don't think so anyway. That's... After I gave him my sword, I went to the battlefield, and the Hero went to the Demon World, so I couldn't confirm it. He had a very conflicted expression, though."

"But, I won't go back on it. I've made this pact, and I won't go back on it, there's no way one could even break such a pact. To give the Hero my sword is to give the Hero my soul. — But, this wasn't something I should have done behind your back. Especially since the Hero belongs to you."

The Demon King: "..."

The Female Paladin: "I'm telling you because we're friends."

The Demon King: "..."

The Female Paladin: "Now then, come at me. I don't mind even if you scold and shout at me. No, that's the reason why I have come. Of course... While I belong to the Hero, the Hero doesn't belong to me. — That's what the Pledge of a Paladin is like. That's why I haven't stolen the Hero or anything, I'll be patient for my whole life. I have no intention of getting in the way of your relationship, because that is your right... to own the Hero. Well, I'm not actually sure how it works, but I think it's something like that?"

The Demon King: "Mmm."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah..."

The Demon King: "I see."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah..."

The Demon King: "I was raised in the Library. It was different from a normal library, but... In other words, I was raised in an environment devoid of company. That's why I was so interested in the love between man and woman."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Demon King: "Would you say that you're jealous?"

The Female Paladin flinches.

The Demon King: "Do you feel a tightness in your chest, a difficulty in breathing, and occasionally get lightheaded? Do you have a sort of strange feeling resulting from the pent-up anger from being unable to achieve what another has achieved, mixing with it self-deprecation and feeling of inferiority?"

The Female Paladin: "Umm, yeah."

The Demon King: "Then I'm jealous."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Demon King: "If I became the kind of Demon King who allows herself to overflow with Demonic energy, this bed would probably already be burnt to a crisp."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah..."

The Demon King: "There are periods when I feel incredibly, incredibly depressed about this."

The Female Paladin: "...Eh?"

The Demon King: "Sometimes I think the Hero would be better off with a normal, human girl, and that makes me sad."

The Female Paladin: "Demon King..."

The Demon King: "No, this weak side of me doesn't manifest even 1% of the time. The Hero is mine, I won't give him to anyone. I won't allow myself to be controlled by the souls of previous Demon Kings either. And I won't lose to the Female Paladin, even if she is a human."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Demon King: "But, it's not possible. The Pledge of the Paladin is an unbreakable vow, much like the contract I have with the Hero, though I've been waiting to meet the Hero for a very, very long time."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "..."

The Female Paladin: "...That's right."

The Demon King: "Then, it can't be helped."

The Female Paladin: "Eh?"

The Demon King: "I hate saying that it can't be helped. I must admit that that is usually what someone says when he does not try very hard and just wants to take the easy way out of things. But sometimes, we really do have no choice, despite what we might hope to do. In these cases, it becomes a phrase filled with courage, the courage to accept the reality of unchangeable circumstances."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Demon King: "It can't be helped that I'm a Demon. If you think of cases in similar situations, this is truly a painful scenario. To begin with, there have been very few Demon Kings that did not have their own private harems. I'm not sure about the Hero, but I never intended to have one. I don't want there to be anyone else but me by the Hero's side, but, out of everyone, if it's the Female Paladin, then I suppose it can't be helped. Above anyone else, I'll have to endure it if it's you."

The Female Paladin: "...Demon King."

The Female Paladin: "Listen, Demon King, carefully."

The Demon King: "I understand."

The Demon King: "I love the Hero. As the one who owns me, and as a man."

The Female Paladin: "I love the Hero. As the owner of my sword, and as a man."

The Demon King: "Yeah."

The Female Paladin: "That's right."

The Demon King: "I understand."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Demon King: "That's why while I intend to let you, I have no intention to lose.

The Pledge of a Paladin doesn't sound like a transfer of ownership. In other words, it's more like a lifelong attachment of service. It's an idea on a completely different level from what the Hero and I have."

The Female Paladin: "I have a history of travelling with the Hero."

The Demon King: "History? If you want to talk about history, I'm the one who's been in that library, right? History refers to a period at least longer than 150 years, right?"

The Female Paladin: "I don't understand what you mean. I've even sucked poison from the wound of the Hero, haven't I!?"

The Demon King: "—?! Oh! So now you want to compare past achievements! Well, I've slept on the Hero's lap! And just last night, we had a reading date!"

The Female Paladin: "Ha! A reading date? What are you, children?"

The Demon King: "Don't go too far, Female Paladin."

The Female Paladin: "Of course! The only things I have no choice but to lose to you in are trifling things like boob size."

The Demon King: "You mean your little girl sized chest?"

The Female Paladin: "Wh-wh-what are you saying, Demon King?!"

The Demon King: "What, did I say something wrong?!"

----- The Village of Wintering, the Manor of the Demon King, the Living Room

Muffled shouting.

Elder Sister Maid: "Those are some really loud noises..."

The Hero: "I'm sure they're celebrating their reunion. They've probably opened some wine or something..."

Elder Sister Maid: "So the Mistress is drunk?"

Little Sister Maid: "Hey, hey, enough about that!"

The Hero: "Oh, that's right, give me a while."

Little Sister Maid: "Yayyy!"

The Hero: "Tada! I've got presents! Do you like them?"

Elder Sister Maid: "What's this?"

The Hero: "First, for the Little Sister Maid, I've got this jade hairpin, and this steamer."

Little Sister Maid: "Steamer? It's big. Is it a basket?"

The Hero: "Nope, it's something you put on top of a pot."

Little Sister Maid: "On top?"

The Hero: "You boil water below it and the boiling water produces steam that can be used to cook food with. Get it?"

Little Sister Maid: "Wow! That sounds so interesting!"

The Hero: "And this is for the Elder Sister Maid."

Elder Sister Maid: "It's for me?"

The Hero: "Yep, she picked this out for you. It's a comb she used to use a long time ago. The Demon... no, I mean the Scholar used to comb her hair all the time with this when she lived alone in her hometown. I hear it makes people more beautiful almost instantly."

Elder Sister Maid: "It's pretty. It looks like jewels."

The Hero: "And this is from me."

Elder Sister Maid: "This is..."

The Hero: "It's a silk satin weave. Umm... I wanted to buy you some clothes or something to look nice in, but I don't know much about it and I didn't want to get the size wrong or anything. So, I'm sorry, but this is the cloth to make it yourself."

Elder Sister Maid: "Wow..."

The Hero: "Ah, I guess it's not good. Is it bad cloth?"

Elder Sister Maid: "No, it's great. I'm really happy! This is the highest quality cloth I've ever come across in my life!"

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah, it's great! It's the sort of cloth a princess would wear."

The Hero: "That's right, the Scholar said she had something for you."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes. Thank you very much."

----- The Demon World, the Trade Routes through the Borderlands

Strong gust of wind blows.

Middle Aged Merchant: "Whoa. What a strong wind."

Anubite Merchant: "It's a seasonal wind."

Caravan Mercenary: "Oh, it's strong!"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Everything is being blown around! I'd better check if all my goods are still here."

Caravan Party: "Hey!"

Anubite Merchant: "You guys are really resolute."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Doing business is the same no matter where you are, isn't it? One has to be resolute to survive."

Anubite Merchant: "Indeed."

Caravan Mercenary: "How is the situation here?"

Anubite Merchant: "It's good and it's bad."

Caravan Mercenary: "Hmm."

Anubite Merchant: "It's all calmed down recently, but this City of the Gate has been a hallowed ground for ages. Tens of Gods have resided here. This was also a vital staging point for the war against the Human World. As I'm sure you know, it was controlled by the Crusaders for a while."

Caravan Mercenary: "Yeah."

Anubite Merchant: "The military was always patrolling the streets, but the order is getting worse. Many of these soldiers are hopeless drunks, while those who are serious about their job tend to become injured very quickly. Law and order in the City of the Gate has always been fairly inconsistent. Well, it's really something which depends on the times."

Caravan Mercenary: "I see."

Middle Aged Merchant: "And what about now?"

Anubite Merchant: "The general consensus is that the administration now is pretty good. Even though the head of government is a human, the Fire Dragon

Lady is right behind to keep him in check. Taxes are low and trade is, for the most part, free. A grand bazaar is organised every month and the marketplace is also open every week on Mondays and Thursdays. Of course, the fact that this is the sort of place where troublesome things are likely to happen still hasn't changed. We must remain vigilant no matter what."

Caravan Mercenary: "That's the most important thing."

Anubite Merchant: "You've got a pretty big train of caravans there."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Really?"

Anubite Merchant: "Yeah, most of the merchants who come here usually come walking with goods bouncing and rattling off one camel."

Middle Aged Merchant: "They don't come with carriages?"

Anubite Merchant: "The sand and mud here is really soft. Rather than getting a consortium of ten or so merchants, in many ways it's more convenient to come as just one merchant, a lot less likely to get stuck."

Middle Aged Merchant: "I see. In my youth, I too have done business on the back of a single pony."

Anubite Merchant: "So what have you brought?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "This time, I come with wheat, incense, and other things."

Anubite Merchant: "Wheat, eh? Over here, we do grow some, but the quality isn't very good. Most of it is used to make alcohol."

Caravan Mercenary: "Is it any good?"

Anubite Merchant: "Not at all. In terms of wine, Fairy Wine is definitely the best, though Fire Dragon wine is the most powerful. I would say Banshee Wine comes as a close second, though I don't see much of that around the market anymore."

Caravan Mercenary: "I suppose wine would be tough to sell?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "It's a very fragile, troublesome good."

Anubite Merchant: "That's right. But, if you could sell it for a good price, then it would be a pretty good business. No matter where you are or what you sell, that's the most important thing."

Caravan Mercenary: "Indeed. Hahaha."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Now that I've gotten to the city, where should I lay down my roots, so to speak?"

Anubite Merchant: "You should probably head to the Sublime Porte and get a Merchant's License first."

Middle Aged Merchant: "License?"

Anubite Merchant: "Yeah. And after that, you should go to the teahouse and make some friends."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Teahouse?"

Anubite Merchant: "Yeah, that's right... It's a bit different in the Human World, I suppose. A teahouse is a place where they serve tea. I don't suppose you know what tea is?"

Caravan Mercenary: "Of course. We're not stupid. Well, I sort of understand what you're trying to say."

Middle Aged Merchant: "And merchants meet over there?"

Anubite Merchant: "Yes that is correct. The teahouse is a place in the city where merchants gather to exchange information. A high-class teahouse sells higher grades of tea and that's where the richer merchants congregate. You could say that the level of tea you drink corresponds to your rank as a merchant. Of course, this shouldn't be taken as a rule, but the same types of merchants tend to meet in the same areas, and that's where you should go to make acquaintances. There are even teahouses where you get private rooms, those are very conducive for business negotiations."

Caravan Mercenary: "Is that so?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Sounds rather like a tavern."

Anubite Merchant: "A tavern doesn't open early in the morning, does it? A teahouse opens even before the chirping of the first bird. The buildings decorated with little birds hanging from cages outside it are the teahouses."

Middle Aged Merchant: "I've learnt something great."

Anubite Merchant: "I'll see you soon then."

Caravan Mercenary: "Oh... What a busy looking street."

Anubite Merchant: "This is the City of the Gate, the greatest city in these parts."

----- **The Demon King Castle, the East Observatory**

The Chief Maid: "...Hmph. Please gather!"

Maid Ghosts: "—"

The Chief Maid: "Heh, I understand. No. 12 is experiencing a stomachache, so she won't be with us. Is everyone else feeling okay?"

Maid Ghosts: "—"

The Chief Maid: "I understand. Then, on to today's business. We're going to be very focused this week. Is that alright? Focused on cleaning the East Wing."

The Chief Maid: "Make sure you clean the linen, arrange fresh flowers, and sweep the yard, please."

Maid Ghosts: "—"

The Chief Maid: "The kitchen? Of course. We're going to be moving all the food from the pantry in, so make sure it's spotless."

Maid Ghosts: "—"

The Chief Maid: "What? Cockroaches? I won't allow it. Kill them all."

Maid Ghosts: "—"

The Chief Maid: "Scary? Fine! If the situation calls for it, you can use some low-level spells. Got it? I won't allow you to disgrace the name of the Royal Maid Squad!"

----- The Demon World, the City of the Gate, Sublime Porte

Aide-de-Camp: "Commander, sir, you have a visitor."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Let him in."

Door opens.

Middle Aged Merchant: "I apologise for the intrusion."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Welcome. I am the Base Commander, the Council Chairman of the Self-Governing Council of this city. Ah, I'm sorry, but you are..."

Middle Aged Merchant: "I am the Middle Aged Merchant. It's a pleasure to meet you for the first time. I hear you're a highly divisive figure in the Human World, but after such a long journey, it is indeed an indescribable feeling to finally meet you." *Smiles.*

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hahaha. I was just left behind when all the other people managed to escape. Well then, take a seat. So? What news do you bring?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "I'm afraid I don't have any reports to make. But I've got something better than urgent news."

East Fortress Base Commander: "And what kind of news is that?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "It's not news, I've got it with me. As requested from me, I have imported the salt."

Chapter 6

East Fortress Base Commander: "The Fire Dragon Lady? Hahahaha! She did it!!! She managed to get us the salt!!!"

Middle Aged Merchant: "That's right, she's a very spirited lady. She left me a note. Here it is."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Amazing! From her?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "If she went so far as to write you a note, then I suppose she intends to stay there for a while longer. That's right, let me introduce you. This is the Captain of the Guard of my caravan convoy, the Caravan Mercenary."

Caravan Mercenary: "A pleasure."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Yeah, a pleasure. This is my Aide-de-camp."

Aide-de-Camp: "I am the Aide-de-Camp, nice to meet you."

Middle Aged Merchant: "I have eighteen caravans worth of goods. Would you like to check?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Alright, Aide-de-camp, do a check please."

Caravan Mercenary: "I will go as well."

Middle Aged Merchant: "I'm counting on you then."

Caravan Mercenary: "I won't be long."



Cockroaches: Even though cockroaches are regarded as unclean, disgusting pests in Japan, throughout the world there are many cultures in which they are used for food, medicine, even as pets. Of course, in just about every country, having cockroaches in the kitchen is a sign of a complete lack of hygiene.

East Fortress Base Commander: "...With that, I have one less thing to worry about."

Middle Aged Merchant: "I too can breathe a sigh of relief."

East Fortress Base Commander: "How is that girl? How is she doing?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "I'm actually just a small merchant belonging to a nameless guild in the Union."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Oh?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "The ones who have been in contact with her are my superiors. Based on their instructions, I began the trade mission."

East Fortress Base Commander: "I understand. How shall I reward you for this then?"

Middle Aged Merchant shuffles uneasily.

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hmm?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "I already receive a salary from the Union. The Union has been informed that through cooperation with the Lady, we will move on to bigger things."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Bigger things?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "It appears we'll be stepping up the volume of trade in goods such as salt. This caravan alone won't do enough, but I'm here to see how else I can help with your shortage of salt. That's the reason why I was hired."

East Fortress Base Commander: "...Hmm."

Middle Aged Merchant: "That's why there's really no need to compensate me outside of my salary."

East Fortress Base Commander: "I understand... In that case, would you like me to take you on a tour of the city?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "No, that's really quite alright. I'm a minor character after all."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hah. If that was the case, I wouldn't have made an appointment to meet you. Because this is a Self-Governing region, the food situation is quite troublesome, so we are quite grateful. I know a great tavern on the outskirts of the City."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Thank you very much, then. I was actually quite scared about going to such a place alone because the people there might be apprehensive about newcomers. It's my first time in the City, and moreover, I've come after such a long trip. —being taken to a tavern by a person familiar with the City to drink a flagon of cold ale, I wouldn't trade a banquet in the Holy Imperial Capital for that!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hahahaha! You can stay there as well and take a good soak. More business can be conducted in the morning. By that time, the inspection of the salt should have been processed as well."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Yeah, I can guarantee the quality. It's Flower Salt made from Snow Gypsum mined from the Blue Moon Sea."

East Fortress Base Commander: "So, I suppose you'll be searching for goods to bring back with you?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "No, I intend to lay down roots in the City and gather information from various people. If I can, there are also a few sectors I intend to introduce myself to."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Oh? Which ones?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "I'll definitely need to patronise the Demon craftsmen and mercenaries. Constructing a safe and well-paved road to the large hole behind the Gate is also a worthwhile cause, I believe."

----- **The Village of Wintering, the Manor of the Demon King, the Maids' Chambers**

The Demon King: "Some really earth-shattering changes have occurred, eh?"

The Chief Maid: "Yes, as you can see from the report, there's really been an uproar."

The Demon King: "From the Inquisition to this Smallpox thing."

The Chief Maid: "Yes."

The Demon King: "The Merchant's plan was to buy goods in bulk in order to force prices up. To go so far as to expend all his financial capital really sends shivers up my spine. And then he went ahead and invented financial futures. In a world without a significant banking system, he managed force this Money Creation in order to increase nominal money. This much rope is more than enough to hang the entire Central Continent with."

The Chief Maid: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "And on top of that, he's trying to do something that can only be a joke."

The Chief Maid: "Oh?"

The Demon King: "Yeah, the exchange for potatoes."

The Chief Maid: "Ohh."

The Demon King: "The Young Merchant, in his position, could have become the largest sponsor of the Holy Empire. Whether he chose not to because of our agreement, for ideology, or because of the tingling of his business senses, I do not know. However, he was willing to gamble with two large economic plans. He must be thinking of the future. His judgment, logically speaking, is correct. In order to ensure the expansion of the economy, it is necessary to come into conflict with many countries and currencies. Especially in dealing with the Demon Race, business experience is something absolutely essential."

The Chief Maid: "Because the Gate was destroyed?"

The Demon King: "Yeah."

The Chief Maid: "How quick."

The Demon King: "There was no way he could have won those Traditionalist merchants who were fussing over culture and customs. No, to tell the truth, they have already been winning for some time now. And that's why he had to gamble. He had to gamble for that never-before-seen victory. That's why I hold such a deep respect for the Merchant's spirit."

The Chief Maid: "And now there will be a contest?"

The Demon King: "That's right, it will be a contest to crush the other before time runs out and the opponent becomes aware. — However, at any rate, we are the same. Despite what they think, neither of the two worlds is heretical. At any rate, someone must have noticed that and torn down the wall between the two worlds.

I don't understand how the Gate was destroyed, but the person who managed to gather such powerful Magical Power in order to destroy the barrier between cross-world exchanges is clearly one who welcomes greater cohesion between the world above and the world below."

The Chief Maid: "We can't stop this wave."

The Demon King: "Indeed."

The Chief Maid: "If only we were prepared."

The Demon King: "There's no way a person could always be prepared. All we can do is react as best we can to situations as they come, make preparations for the worst foreseeable scenarios. Moreover..."

The Chief Maid: "?"

The Demon King: "Have you seen the proclamation from the Kingdom of Winter, Chief Maid?"

The Chief Maid: "Yes."

The Demon King: "Isn't it brilliant? Isn't it wonderful! This is... This is what I've been bursting to see. The establishment of the three Fundamental Human Rights to Life, Property and Freedom. It's not yet the merging of ancient faiths with theology, but this is the beginning of the extension of basic humanity towards universal love for the people around us. Lumen Naturale, this is the Enlightenment... This era was started by an individual girl who, amidst the blood of wounds, pain and spiritual suffering, strove desperately against all odds to find the seeds of the Enlightenment. This isn't something I taught her. No, even if I had taught her, this isn't a 'knowledge' that can be passed down. Nothing would have come if I had tried to teach her. This girl crossed that wall borne on the light of her very soul."



Explanation

Creation of Money: This refers to the creation of more credit. Usually, money is borrowed from a bank, which is then used to enrich the supply of a good, hence money flows from the hands of the banks back into the economy and the total value of the economy increases. The Young Merchant's Wheat Futures is an asset which can create money when people with money they wouldn't usually use release money into the economy by buying these futures.

Fundamental Human Rights: The rights every human is born with, regardless of position in society. Whether it be the country or the village, every construct should always strive to uphold fair human rights for every member of the society.

Lumen Naturale: The Latin word for the Enlightenment, as coined by Rene Descartes.

The Chief Maid: "Yes."

The Demon King: "Aren't you happy? There's a line written in the proclamation, 'I will not go back to being an insect, no matter how hard it is..'"

The Chief Maid: "...No."

The Demon King: "?"

The Chief Maid: "I..."

The Demon King: "Yeah..."

The Chief Maid: "What did she hope to achieve?"

The Demon King: “...”

The Chief Maid: “She shouldn’t have... It wasn’t something she should have said.”

The Demon King: “...Hehe. It’s not just her. Take a look.”

The Demon King: “It seems a whole slew of events took place. The resurgence of paper for records-keeping purposes. It allowed efficient experimental results, remuneration reforms, and even the establishment of a bureaucracy. Taxes have progressed towards a Bloc Economy, a brand-new economic system. And the matter with the potatoes as well, they’ve really managed to struggle through the whole heretical crop incident very well. Good job, Disciple Merchant.

“On the military side, I’m not very clear on the details but it seems that Field Camps and Oblique Orders are undiscovered military technologies, yet they were still effectively applied by the Disciple Soldier. Military medicine is definitely not yet advanced enough, but significant advances are being made in the field of medicine. The Disciple Nobleman is also working hard as a Lobbyist to the Central Continent. Despite their hardline stance, wartime negotiations still took place. I really respect the courage of that young man.

“Even though I taught them many things, all of these were miracles produced by their own hard work. The people born to this world, so that the world will become a better place, are truly willing to expend their knowledge and creativity in order to make miracles occur.”

The Chief Maid: “Yes.”

The Demon King: “Humans are wonderful. This world is wonderful... But we Demons won’t lose to them. We have many windmills. We have even established foreign exchange mechanisms. I was also shocked to hear about the establishment of a postal system. There is also a brilliantly effective system of Public Works and Hospitals. It seems the Fang Race and the Banshee Race have also entered into a sort of political union for effective administration.”

The Chief Maid: “Yes.”

The Demon King: “The world outside the Library— It’s so rowdy, so chaotic, and so loveable.”

The Chief Maid: “Your Majesty?”

The Demon King: “?”

The Chief Maid: “Are you crying?”

The Demon King: “Eh?”

The Chief Maid: “Your Majesty.”

The Demon King wipes her face.

The Chief Maid: “— I have a handkerchief ready for you.”

The Demon King: “Mmm.”

The Chief Maid: “Is it that tragic?”

The Demon King: “No. Probably not.”

The Chief Maid: “Yes.”

The Demon King: “No. I may be shedding tears, but I’m not crying. I’m just thinking about how good this all is. I’m probably feeling a bit proud. Even though it’s not my work — I really like this world.”

The Chief Maid: “I think so as well. I often think about how nice it is to have seen it.”

The Demon King: “Yeah, that’s right. It wasn’t a failure to leave the Library after all.



Explanation

preventing the Southern United Kingdoms from suffering the same hyperinflation that the Central Continent went through.

Lobbyist: A person who attempts to influence government possibly by cultivating good relationships, negotiating, and otherwise persuading politicians. In Middle Age society, the society was then classified into social strata based on connections and influences, hence the diplomatic world depended heavily on such lobbyists (not what they were called back then) in order to bring about suitable results for their home countries.

----- **The Village of Wintering, the Yard behind the Holy Order Headquarters**

Swords clashing.

The Hero: "...Hah! Hah!"

The Female Paladin: "Hah, hah! ...Hah!"

Swords clashing.

The Hero: "Haiya!"

The Female Paladin: “Yaaah!”

Swords clashing.

The Hero: “You’re really into it today.”

The Female Paladin: “Not yet! Hah!”

The Hero: “Over here!”

Swords clashing.

The Hero: “—! Speed Up Spell!”

The Female Paladin: “Prayer for Speed!”

Swords clashing repeatedly.

The Hero: “Take this! Haiya!”

The Female Paladin: “Not yet!”

Swords clashing.

The Hero: “Amazing, you seem to have gotten better, or maybe you’re just more motivated now.”

The Female Paladin: “Both.”

Swords clashing.

The Hero: “Take this then! Haaaaa!”

The Female Paladin: “! Triple Wall of Light!”

Swords clashing.

The Female Paladin: “—! Haaaaaaaa!”

The Hero: “Unfortunately.” *Whacks her on head.*

The Female Paladin: “...”

The Hero: "I win." *Lalalalala ↗ Lalalaala ↗*

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Hero: "You were the one who asked me for a practice match."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah, but I'm still feeling resentful. Resentfulness is my biggest weakness. But this time, it's justified."

The Hero: "I see, I see." *Armour rattles.*

The Female Paladin: "What's wrong?"

The Hero: "I'm just going to rest for a bit."

The Female Paladin: "You've cut your hair."

The Hero: "She cut it for me."

The Female Paladin: "She's pretty good, it fits you."

The Hero: "My head feels lighter. It's pretty good."

The Female Paladin: "That's why you were in such great shape."

The Hero: "Yeah, that's right."

The Hero: "..."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Hero: "Wait, what do you mean by that!"

The Female Paladin: "Nothing much. Really."

The Hero: "...Is that so? Okay..."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Female Paladin: (Wh-what should I do. The Hero's attitude doesn't seem very good. But my heart is beating so fast. This is the first time we've been alone since I gave him my sword. That being said, he's looking at my face? Am I blushing?!)

The Hero: "...Ah."

The Female Paladin: "What is it?"

The Hero: "Nothing."

The Female Paladin: (Why did he reply to me in that tone! Does he not want to confide in me?!)

The Hero: "Well, you've got a very strong defence."

The Female Paladin: "Y-yeah."

The Hero: "Even though I was fairly confident of the stopping power of my abilities, your Wall of Light can still overpower them—every single powerful technique of mine"

The Female Paladin: "Is that so?"

The Hero: "More or less."

The Female Paladin: "I see..."

The Hero: "...Ah, umm."

The Female Paladin: "?"

The Hero: "I'm not putting you down or anything."

The Female Paladin: "I know."

The Hero: "..."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Hero and the Female Paladin: "Umm."

The Hero: "Ah, you go first."

The Female Paladin: "No, no, you go first."

The Hero: "No, really, go first."

The Female Paladin: "Umm ...Hero."

The Hero: "Yes?"

The Female Paladin: "Just now you used a technique where you waved your sword a bit and it became completely blurry. I couldn't even sense its presence, it completely overcame my anti-magic barrier."

The Hero: "Yeah, it's one of the 46 Techniques of the Sword of the Hero."

The Female Paladin: "Is that so? You didn't use it very much last time. I'd like to memorise it, so could you show it to me?"

The Hero: "Umm, no way."

The Female Paladin: "Why?"

The Hero: "Like I said, it's the Sword of the Hero. It's supposed to be special."

The Female Paladin: "But if you don't use it, no one will know."

The Hero: "That's true."

Draws sword.

The Hero: "Just grip the sword like this. No, any footwork is fine. In any case, take a stance with your sword pointing towards the enemy."

The Female Paladin: "Mmm."

The Hero: "And then, transfer all the weight on to the index finger of your left hand."

The Female Paladin: "Won't your sword drop?"

The Hero: "You've got to pay attention to the balance. Make sure you can barely feel it in the palm of your hand."

The Female Paladin: "What an appropriate technique."

The Hero: "And then send some mana into the blade of your sword."

The Female Paladin: "What's the incantation?"

The Hero: "There is no incantation, you just have to feel it. It feels like you're compressing all the energy in the surrounding air and shooting it straight through your fingertips."

The Female Paladin: "This has suddenly become very difficult."

The Hero: "Well, it's that kind of technique."

The Female Paladin: "A technique based on gut feeling! I don't believe it."

The Hero: "Even if you say that... All my techniques are like that..."

The Female Paladin: "This clearly wasn't meant to be taught to people."

The Hero: "I got them on my own."

The Female Paladin: "...Are you displeased?"

The Hero: "No, that's not it. But even if I'm good at destroying and killing things, it's just so uninteresting."

The Female Paladin: "...Is that so?"

The Hero: "It is."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Hero: "..." *Shivers.*

The Female Paladin: "It's getting cold, shall we go back to the Headquarters? I'll get them to prepare something warm."

The Hero: "I see."

The Female Paladin: "And you can sleep on my lap."

The Hero: "Huh?!"

The Female Paladin: "I'm kind of handicapped in that aspect."

The Hero: "What are you saying?"

The Female Paladin: "Isn't it fine! Just cooperate! My boobs are one thing, but surely you can agree to this!"

The Hero: "...Why are you raging?"

The Female Paladin: "That's not something I wanted. I'm just so unfulfilled."

----- **The Village of Wintering, the Manor of the Demon King, the Living Room**

The Demon King: "Solace?"

The Hero: "Retreat?"

The Chief Maid: "Yes."

The Demon King: "What's that, some kind of theological practice?"

The Hero: "Uhh, no, I don't think so."

The Chief Maid: "Since ancient times, it's a customary way to reward a maid."

The Demon King: "Is that so?"

The Hero: "I would like to help, but I don't really understand what it is."

The Chief Maid: "I apologise for the misunderstanding."

Elder Sister Maid: "Is it a sort of holiday?"

Little Sister Maid: "What is that?"

The Chief Maid: "It's when you go somewhere far away."

The Hero: "Like a trip?"

Little Sister Maid: "Is she moving away?"

The Demon King: "No, it's not a long-term thing."

Little Sister Maid: "Then she's going to roam the land? She's going to be a vagabond?"

The Hero: "Somehow, you seem to have come up with some very painful imagery."

The Chief Maid: "A Solace Retreat is, to a Maid who devotes her life to service, the highest honour an employer can bestow. In recognition of service, the employer can give the Maid some rest time to go on her Solace Retreat. This is run by a guild of specialised Divine servants."

Elder Sister Maid: "Huh..."

The Hero: "What do you do?"

The Chief Maid: "First we go to a remote location with picturesque scenery and check into an inn."

The Demon King: "Mmhmm."

The Chief Maid: "Of course, the inn will be staffed with their own personnel, and they will be the ones doing the cooking, cleaning, and washing in place of the Maid. It's to give some rest to Maids who are always rushing about busily. That's the purpose of a Solace Retreat."

The Demon King: "So, it's a rest. I see, you could have just said so from the start."

The Chief Maid: "I intend to head to the hot springs."

Little Sister Maid: "Hot springs?"

The Demon King: "They're very large baths. Depending on the hot springs, there are even some as big as a castle."

Elder Sister Maid: "What?!"

The Chief Maid: "In those hot springs, one will wash away the fatigue of these days and can step up to a new level of Maidhood."

The Demon King: "I can understand the relaxation."

The Chief Maid: "While Your Majesty and I were away on our business trip, the two of them did a splendid job maintaining the household and I believe it is appropriate to reward them for their efforts."

Little Sister Maid: "In other words, this is for us?"

Elder Sister Maid: "It's not just for play."

The Demon King: "In that case, I leave such affairs entirely to your discretion."

The Hero: "I can't believe I never thought of such a thing."

The Chief Maid: "It may take a while, but since we've gone through so much trouble, it's always a good thing to rest."

The Demon King: "We were really busy after all."

The Hero: "Haven't you just been spending the day sleeping in that room?"

The Demon King: "What?! I went through the toughest battle I had ever been involved in in that place!"

The Chief Maid: "You two come over here."

Elder Sister Maid and Little Sister Maid: "Yes, ma'am!"

Little Sister Maid: "Eh ..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Ah ..."

The Chief Maid: "Well done."

Elder Sister Maid: "Thank you very much!"

Little Sister Maid: "Thank you!"

The Demon King: "Hehe."

The Hero: "How nice." *Smiles.*

The Chief Maid: "Right then, Your Majesty, Hero. This may be presumptuous, but I would like for the two of you to come with us. There may not be another proposition as timely as this."

The Hero: "Is that so?"

The Chief Maid: "The fates of the worlds more or less rest in your hands, there will be issues to deal with such as the prevention of war and other tangles. You will quickly become exhausted. Once the winter ends, you will fast become incredibly busy. If you want to go, this is likely your only chance."

The Demon King: "That's true."

The Hero: "Indeed."

Elder Sister Maid: "Let's go together!" *Smiles.*

Little Sister Maid: "Together!"

The Chief Maid: "Hero, please help with the movement."

The Hero: "Ah. The movement? Well, I suppose we don't have time."

The Demon King: "Have you booked a place?"

The Chief Maid: "Yes. I've booked an Old City Inn with an illustrious tradition. I've also told them to prepare their Grand Bath, it's specially made for three people. I hear it can really get one in the mood."

Volume 2 Chapter 7, “This is the Luxurious Old City Inn *The Demon King Hotsprings Villa*”

----- *The Demon King Hotsprings Villa Entrance*

Flash of teleportation!

The Chief Maid: “Well then, we’ve arrived.”

The Demon King: “Can’t you make it a bit cleaner, at least sweep the place a bit? It’s a lot worse than usual.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Is this really an inn? Amazing. It almost looks like a castle.”

The Hero: (That’s... because it is a castle...)

Little Sister Maid: “Amazing! Wonderful! Is this a vase?” *Shakes vase.*

The Female Paladin: “W-w-wait. Hero. Didn’t you tell me this was going to be a small two-day vacation?!?”

The Hero: “It is, isn’t it?”

The Female Paladin: “Isn’t this the D-D-Demon—”

The Chief Maid: “This is the luxurious old city inn *The Demon King Hotsprings Villa*.”

The Female Paladin: “Don’t lie to me! How does this look like an inn? What’s with these suits of armour?! That blood-stained tapestry?! What kind of inn is this?!?”

The Mage: “...It’s art.”

The Chief Maid: “My, my, the hospitality of the ghosts is just a bit off.”

The Female Paladin: “Just a bit?! This place is obviously a goddamn deathtrap, isn’t it?! Ohh, Spirit above, pardon my swearing. I’ve said something unclean. It’s something I seldom do, so please forgive the transgression. Anyway...”

"That isn't it! In order to break out of this killing zone, we've got to be vigilant. I'll take the forward vanguard position, the Hero will cover everyone from the middle, and the Mage will be the rear guard providing supporting fire."

The Hero: "Relax."

The Female Paladin: "What?!"

Little Sister Maid: "The Paladin is so flustered."

The Hero: (*small voice*) "Just calm down for a bit. We're in the company of the Demon King! It can't possibly be as bad as you say."

The Female Paladin: (*small voice*) "Oh that's true... Sorry."

The Mage: "What good friends..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah, they really have a great relationship."

The Demon King: "I have a better relationship with him!"

The Chief Maid: "Of course you do. Your relationship with the Hero is the closest among anybody. I'll be the living testimony to that."

The Demon King: "You're always lying to me."

Elder Sister Maid: "It's a good thing to have a close relationship."

Little Sister Maid: "Good thing?"

The Mage: "...We also have a relatively good relationship. You maids and I."

Little Sister Maid: "Indeed, Sleeping Sister!"

The Female Paladin: "Enough! I have a better relationship!"

The Demon King: "If you're talking about that, I've even spent a night with him before."

The Hero: "Hey, everyone has a good relationship, alright?"

The Chief Maid: "It looks like you've got too many relationships going on."

Little Sister Maid: "You're really popular with the girls!"

The Mage: "...You have too many girls."

Little Sister Maid: "Lots and lots. ♪"

The Mage: "...You could say that."

The Demon King: "..."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Chief Maid: "On a different subject, Hero, you didn't invite the Butler?"

The Hero: "No, he had a lot of things to do. To begin with, I didn't know what would happen if we invited a guy like him to a hot springs."

The Chief Maid: "And those three disciples?"

The Hero: "They're all really busy. They've got a lot of planning to do."

Little Sister Maid: "Hero, you don't have any male friends?"

The Hero: "Wh-what are you saying?!"

Little Sister Maid: "Don't you have friends you can go out with?"

The Hero: "Eh? Uhh... nope? Not really. Not really? Everyone went to do their own thing, whether they joined the army, or the government, or started travelling the world? Such weird kids doing such important things, these are things which aren't easy no matter which part of the world you come from. Really. For a person my age, being a lone wolf is pretty cool, right? From time to time, I like to work in a group as well though? Right?"

The Chief Maid: "A man should do things on his own."

The Mage: "...You loner."

The Demon King: "H-Hero? Is that true? I didn't get the feeling that all your previous acquaintances were female as well."

The Hero: "Wh-what are you saying?"

The Female Paladin: "It's probably because the Hero keeps a special lookout, no matter where he is, for damsels in distress whom he can rescue. He wants to build his own fan club. He can steadily increase the membership and even turn it into a business."

Little Sister Maid: "Are you being bullied, Hero?"

Elder Sister Maid: "You look angry."

The Chief Maid: "My, my."

The Female Paladin: "The Hero probably lets girls with bigger boobs do whatever they want with him, without caring about things like chastity."

The Demon King: "Enough with the boobs. It all grew on its own. My body isn't a crime. I had no role in its growing at all."

The Hero: "How did we get here..."

Little Sister Maid: "Hero, Hero."

The Hero: "..."

Little Sister Maid: "Don't worry, I'll be your friend. ♪"

The Hero: "Eh? Ah... Yeah. Thanks."

The Female Paladin: "Hero, don't tell me..."

The Demon King: "I don't believe what I'm witnessing. To think even a young girl of that age..."

The Hero: "No! That's not! It's a misunderstanding! It's all a misunderstanding."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Little Sister Maid: "Oh?"

The Chief Maid: "My, my."

The Female Paladin: "Are you trying to create a colonist of girls to surround yourself with?"

The Demon King: "As the owner of the Hero, let me say something about the gender ratio of the friends you make!"

The Hero: "No, you've got it all wrong! This isn't what you think!"

The Female Paladin: "It is not the way of the Paladin at all to make excuses."

The Hero: "I'm not a Paladin."

The Demon King: "Taking the easy way out, that's the kind of Hero you are in the end."

The Mage: "...Under siege."

The Hero: "Help me, Mage."

The Mage: "Try not to murder him."

The Hero: "I don't understand—"

The Female Paladin: "The Hero is wrong in this case."

The Demon King: "This is a lack of resourcefulness. It's bad not to have any sense of peace or security."

The Hero: "Can't you just drop the issue! You girls really know how to band together and attack me from all sides! I'll show you. I only need one or two friends. I'll show you!"

----- The Sisters' Room in *The Demon King*

Little Sister Maid: "Amazing! The mattress is so soft!"

Bounce, bounce.

Elder Sister Maid: "Hey, sis, don't do that."

Little Sister Maid: "But it's so soft and bouncy! It's amazing!"

Elder Sister Maid: "Really?"

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah. ♪"

Elder Sister Maid: "I see..."

Little Sister Maid: "Come and try too!"

Sits on mattress hesitantly.

Elder Sister Maid: "Wow, it's great!"

Little Sister Maid: "Isn't it? What is it made out of? Cotton? Hay?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I've read about mattresses stuffed with bird feathers."

Bounce, bounce.

Little Sister Maid: "Is that so! This is brilliant! I didn't know you could make mattresses with birdie feathers! — Ahhh."

Elder Sister Maid: "What's up?"

Little Sister Maid: "There's a door over there."

Opens door.

Little Sister Maid: "Wow!"

Elder Sister Maid: "What is it?"

Little Sister Maid: "There're lots of dresses hanging there. And linen. There's even a bath!"

Elder Sister Maid: "A hot spring? This room is that big?"

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah, it's as big as the manor."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah. That Chief Maid... To think she would keep such a large bath a secret from us."

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah!"

Elder Sister Maid: "But what a pretty bath."

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah! Ah, Sis!"

Elder Sister Maid: "What?"

Little Sister Maid: "This soap, it has a rose carved into it."

Elder Sister Maid: "Wow..."

Little Sister Maid: "It's amazing!"

Elder Sister Maid: "It is! It is!"

Little Sister Maid: "Let's take a bath!"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah, it looks big enough for the both of us."

Little Sister Maid: "I'll help you wash your back!"

Elder Sister Maid: "You don't need to."

Little Sister Maid: "And you hair. ♪"

Elder Sister Maid: "Fine, fine." *Smiles.*

----- The Demon King Castle, Bottom Level, the Doors to the Palace of Death

The Mage: "..."

The Chief Maid: "How is it?"

The Mage: "...No reaction."

The Chief Maid: "It's gone?"

The Mage: "...Not sure, but..."

The Chief Maid: "Yes?"

The Mage: "The Hero was the one who destroyed the gate?"

The Chief Maid: "Yes."

The Mage: "..."

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Mage: "...He also broke the Reincarnation Sublimation Barrier."

The Chief Maid: "As I had expected..."

The Mage: "I'm afraid this will be no successor to the Demon King. It seems..."

The Chief Maid: "It seems?"

The Mage: "...the world will descend into anarchy."

The Chief Maid: "And the Spirit of the Demon King?"

The Mage: "It has been released into the world."

----- The Sisters' Room in *The Demon King*

Knock knock.

The Demon King: "Hey, anyone in?"

Knock knock.

The Demon King: "It's me."

Opens door.

Elder Sister Maid: "Mistress."

Little Sister Maid: "What's up, Mistress?"

The Demon King: "What are you doing?"

Elder Sister Maid: "We're preparing our clothes for a bath."

Little Sister Maid: "Oh, oh, the soap is very cute."

The Demon King: "That's just perfect. Let's take a bath."

Elder Sister Maid: "Sorry?"

The Demon King: "The bath is a bit out of the way. I came to tell you."

Elder Sister Maid: "Eh? ...It's somewhere else?"

The Demon King: "That's right. You can go with just a change of clothes."

Elder Sister Maid: "I see."

Little Sister Maid: "Did you see my panties? I can't find them!"

Elder Sister Maid: "I've got yours here."

The Demon King: "Hehehehe."

----- The Hotsprings in *The Demon King*

The Female Paladin: "Ahh, this is relaxing."

The Chief Maid: "It's a lot warmer and shallower than it looks."

The Female Paladin: "I really love the luxury of hot water."

The Mage: "...Luxurious."

The Demon King: "Why are the two of you so petrified?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I hear people drown in baths, right?!"

Little Sister Maid: "This bath doesn't even have a ceiling?!"

The Demon King: "That's because this is a hot spring."

Elder Sister Maid: "I see."

Little Sister Maid: "The steam is all white and fluffy!"

The Chief Maid: "Hey, stop clowning around and relax."

Maid Sisters: "Yes, ma'am!"

Steam rises.

Elder Sister Maid: "It's warm..."

Little Sister Maid: "It's so hot!"

The Chief Maid: "Whoa, you've turned completely red."

Little Sister Maid: "But I feel fine—"

The Female Paladin: "Oh? But you're completely flushed."

The Mage: "...People who are born in cold areas like the South are not usually used to the temperature of hot water, so they have a low tolerance level."

The Demon King: "I see, so it's a regional thing."

Elder Sister Maid: "My sister pushes herself so she can join everybody, I'm really sorry, do you think you could make it less hot?"

Little Sister Maid: "Uhh."

The Mage: "...Cone of Cold." *Frost tingling.*

Little Sister Maid: "Ah?!"

The Mage: "...It's at a good temperature now."

Steam rises.

The Demon King: "Ahh, it's been a while since I was last this comfortable."



The Mage: “...”

The Demon King: “What’s up, Mage?”

The Mage: “Nothing.”

The Demon King: “We may be the same Race, but we specialise in different things, so I guess there’s not much to talk about, huh.”

The Mage nods.

The Demon King: “I am the Demon King, I specialise in Economics and Finance.”

The Mage: “...The Mage. Folklore.”

The Demon King: “Really? Weren’t you one of the Hero’s companions?”

The Mage nods.

The Demon King: “What kind of person is he?”

The Mage: “Stupid.”

The Demon King: “Really. Hmm...”

The Mage: “...He only knows how to save lives. Only knows how to get into more trouble.”

TL Note: Okay this is impossible to translate. Basically, the Japanese word for ‘stupid’ is ‘baka’, while the word for ‘only’ is ‘bakari’. It’s a pun.

The Demon King: “Indeed.”

The Mage: “The Hero of the Demon World.”

The Demon King: “Eh?”

The Mage: “— The Hero of the Human World too.”

The Demon King: "The Hero is... A very important figure... Why is he not a King? Based on his battle ability, his dependability, kindness, and the fact that he's a Hero, his name alone must surely be worth a crown."

The Mage: "..."

The Demon King: "Though I met the Hero five years earlier than expected, I'd thought he would be a King by then."

The Mage: "...That's because you're stupid."

The Demon King: "Is that so."

The Mage: "..."

The Demon King: "The Hero could have united the Human World under his kingship and invaded the world underground. That Hero, whom I now place all my trust and hopes in, undertaking an invasion of the Demon World... There are stories that read like this as well."

The Mage: "No meaning."

The Demon King: "No?"

The Mage: "...You definitely won't be the target of such a trip."

The Demon King: "That's true. I would be fully occupied on the battlefield."

The Mage: "..."

The Demon King: "..."

The Mage: "..."

The Demon King: "So, Mage, what do you see inside me?"

The Mage: "...Huge."

The Demon King: "Huh?"

The Mage: "..."

The Demon King: "Uh, uhh, don't look at that."

The Chief Maid: "That's not she was saying."

The Mage: "...Those are beautiful breasts."

The Demon King: "Uhh."

The Chief Maid: "Rather than just combat ability, a voluminous saturation attack can also be conducted. The warmth of a mother's breast is something that stays with a person since childhood. Compared to that, something like combat ability is just like trampling on small twigs."

The Female Paladin: "Small twigs?"

The Mage: "...Mean."

The Demon King: "You may say that, but I don't have that much confidence in my breasts. They're heavy and they never settle down, though I suppose they give a nice shape ..."

The Female Paladin: "Hmph! They just distract you from what is really important."

Little Sister Maid: "Why do I have no boobies?"

Elder Sister Maid: "We'll have them when we grow older. Turn over there so I can wash your hair."

The Chief Maid: "No way. What a guy thinks is attractive is completely different from what a girl thinks about herself. Something soft that lets your finger sink deep into it is sweet poison to the boys."

The Female Paladin: "— These tyrannical kingdoms have resulted in such warped values. Can we really just let such anarchy slip past?! Our Order of the Lake will wipe out this impurity!"

The Demon King: "Really? So my flab has value?"

The Mage: "...You're like the Courtesan General."

The Demon King: “Didn’t she die in Volume 3?”

The Mage: “...She was very popular, so I brought her back in Volume 5.”

The Female Paladin: “You don’t know what it’s like to be bullied for it. Just because I’m flat, I’ve had to give up on all my hopes and dreams!”

The Mage: “...It’s okay. There are some people who like that type as well.”

The Chief Maid: “My, my. Even though I helped to construct the best possible scenarios, the Hero still didn’t make the correct choices immediately.”

The Demon King: “H-H-Hey! Don’t assign values to people based on the size of their boobs!”

The Female Paladin: “Ooooh, we finally have something in common! That’s right! The worth of a person is not based on the size of their breasts!”

The Mage: “...The true power in the world.”

Little Maid Sister: “This conversation is very difficult to understand.”

Elder Maid Sister: “That’s right. Here, sink your head into the water.”

Sinks into hot springs water.

Little Maid Sister: “Oooooo.” *Bubbling.*

Elder Maid Sister: “You may talk now.”

The Chief Maid: “Then, I suppose this will have to be decided at the next match.”

The Demon King and the Female Paladin: “Match?”

The Chief Maid: “Yes. I’ll go prepare the banquet.” *Smiles.*

TL Explanation

Kitsune, Bear & Tanuki: Kitsune are Japanese foxes, while Tanuki are Japanese racoon dogs. In Japanese folklore, all three animals are often depicted as intelligent, mischievous and cunning shape-shifters. The Bear is usually depicted as slower and more lumbering, though not stupid. On occasion, they often help the good people, albeit usually in a naughty way.

----- A Forest on the Border

Kitsune: “Hey, hey.”

The Hero: “I’m counting on you. Please be my friends!”

Kitsune laughs.

Tanuki: “Hehehe!”

The Hero: “Please be my friends!”

Tanuki snorts.

The Hero: “Please be my friends!!!”

Bear: “Haaaaaa!”

The Hero: “This time, I don’t mind anything! Be my friend—!”

Bear roars.

----- *The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in a Large Tatami-floored Room*

The Demon King: “Yeahhh!”

The Female Paladin: “Ahh! Heh! Another glass!”

The Chief Maid: "Please, please."

The Chief Maid pours wine.

The Demon King: "How about that, Female Paladin, why don't you just take off your socks?"

The Female Paladin: "Shut up, I'm still going strong. Again! Again! I will show you the Secret Technique of the Holy Order of the Lake!"

The Mage: "Scissors."

The Demon King and the Female Paladin: "Paper, stone!!!"

The Demon King: "What?!"

The Female Paladin: "I win!!!"

Little Maid Sister: "The Female Paladin looks really happy with herself."

Elder Maid Sister: "That's because she's had a real losing streak."

The Demon King: "I will have to re-plan my concept of Probability Theory."

The Female Paladin: "What do you mean by probability theory? A loss is a loss!

The words of one who loses are no better than mud. Hahahahaha!"

Little Maid Sister shudders.

Elder Maid Sister: "Umm, you're shivering..."

The Demon King: "Heh... Taking my coat off here is just suicide. Chief Maid, give me another cup too!"

The Chief Maid: "Yes, Your Majesty, I understand." *Chief Maid pours wine.*

The Female Paladin: "Hehe, you sure are stubborn."

The Demon King: "Yeah. I'm the Demon King after all, I have a name and a reputation which I need to uphold."

The Mage: "If you showed her some boob, maybe the Female Paladin might get depressed and lose heart."

The Demon King: "I'm not going to do a suicide attack!!!"

Little Maid Sister: "What are they talking about?"

Elder Maid Sister: "Uhh, uhh... I don't know."

The Demon King: "Ahh... No good. My feet are wavering."

The Chief Maid: "It's pure Banshee Rice Wine after all."

The Female Paladin: "Hahahahaha! The Demon King can barely stand. Hahahahaha!"

The Mage: "...The same can be said for you."

The Demon King: "Yeah! Oh, the Hero is quite late..."

The Female Paladin: "He's probably ashamed of himself and couldn't bear to show his face. He has no friends after all."

The Demon King: "Wh=whoa. You even used that against him?!"

The Mage: "She's cruel when she's drunk."

The Demon King: "Unknowingly..."

Elder Maid Sister: "These boiled vegetables are really great."

Little Maid Sister: "Delicious! ♪ Wow, the meat is good too!"

The Chief Maid: "Shall I send reinforcements to get him here soon?"

The Female Paladin: "He'd better have a good explanation for being late to the banquet! He should apologise to everyone when he comes!"

The Mage: "...He's here."

Door opens.

The Hero: "Sorry for the wait! I'm here!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "..."

Aide-de-Camp: "..."

Elder Maid Sister: "Welcome home."

Little Maid Sister: "Welcome back."

The Chief Maid: "What's wrong with the two of you, hurry up and go get some food and wine."

The Female Paladin: "Hero, you're late! Where have you been playing?!"

The Mage: "...Irresponsible."

The Demon King: "Ah?! It's the Hero! You're late! Let's drink. You've finally come to keep me company! Drink! Drink!"

The Hero: "Whoa, she's had way too much."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Psst."

The Hero: "What?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Come here, come here."

The Hero: "What's up?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Don't tell me this place is..."

The Hero: "It's the Demon King Castle?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "I came here because you said there was good wine to be had!"

The Hero: "There is, there is. A free banquet too. Isn't that super worth it?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "I didn't expect it would be this way, but why are you all gathered here?"

The Hero: "It looks like a family trip."

The Chief Maid: "Dear guests, have a cup please."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Y-yes... Ohh, thank you. This is... Banshee Wine?
What a top-class product."

The Chief Maid: "I am the humble servant of my Mistress. Please call me the Chief
Maid."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Yes, respectfully... I say, Black Knight."

The Hero: "Ahhh— yeah?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "It must be great to be by the Demon King's side.
To have such a beautiful Chief Maid working for you, that's gotta be amazing."

The Hero: "She's not my maid, she's the Demon King's maid."

East Fortress Base Commander: "I see, the Demon King's... It seemed strange that
she would be a mere attendant to such a place. So she's the Demon King's maid,
then. I've fought wars in many places and seen many things, but a Demon King
having such a beautiful woman as a maid, that really makes me feel the grandeur
of the Demon World."

The Hero: "Demon King? Demon King? Aren't you going to say something?"

The Demon King: "What? Hero? I'm a bit tipsy. Whozzat?"

East Fortress Base Commander and Aide-de-Camp: "Eh?"

The Hero: "Didn't I tell you? This is the East Fortress Base Commander. He's the
current President of the Self-Governing Council of the City of the Gate. This is his
Aide-de-Camp. They've always been helping us out."

The Demon King: "Ohhh! I get it now! Nice to meet you, Base Commander! I've
heard a lot about the restoration of law and order and the revitalising of the
economy in the city. You really are a highly capable administrator."

East Fortress Base Commander and Aide-de-Camp: "Eh?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hang on a minute?!"

The Hero: "Sorry, it's so sudden. But this is the Demon King Castle, so I can't help it that the Demon King is here."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Is this a surprise attack?! You've got to let me prepare my heart."

The Hero: "You're a mercenary! You should be prepared for such surprises."

Aide-de-Camp: (Thankfully, I'm just an aide-de-camp...)

Elder Sister Maid: "Alright, make sure you don't drop it, alright?"

Little Sister Maid: "Okay. ♪"

The Hero: "This is the Grandmaster of the Holy Order of the Lake, the Female Paladin. In her free time she also serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the Tripartite Union."

The Female Paladin: "It is an honour to make your acquaintance, East Fortress Base Commander. But I currently serve as the Sword of the Hero, even though he is willing to let me sit here and rust."

The Hero: "She's drunk. I apologise, they're all good people, but are weak to alcohol. Then, umm... This is the Mage. She may look really sleepy but she's very powerful. I'm sure you've heard of 'The Living Nightmare.'"

The Mage: "...Meh."

Aide-de-Camp: "A-a-aren't they...?!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "The members of the Hero's Party?! Why are such Heroes lounging in the Demon King Castle, drinking wine with the Demon King?! What kind of family vacation is this?!"

The Demon King: "Hero. Explain it to them."

The Chief Maid: "My, my."

Aide-de-Camp: "H-Hero?"

The Hero: "Sorry. Sorry. I'm the Black Knight, but I'm also the Hero. No, actually, I'm the Hero first. But she was scouting for a person to fill the Black Knight position. I was thinking that instead of taking down the Demon King, maybe we could work together."

East Fortress Base Commander: "..."

Aide-de-Camp: "..."

The Hero: "Like a Combo?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "What in the name of hell do you mean by that?!"

----- ***The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in a Large Tatami-floored Room***

~♪ ~～♪

Little Maid Sister: "This bread is really tasty ~♪"

The Female Paladin: "Would you like a drink, Base Commander?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "I apologise for my state of emotions earlier. Please Female Paladin, I would love a drink."

The Female Paladin: "Just call me Paladin. I'm younger than you and in the first place, I'm sorry for showing you my drunk side off the bat. I've heard you have the experience of your years and the conduct of a true general, so I really wanted to meet you at least once."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Y-yes..."

The Female Paladin: "Here, have another cup. Please call me the Paladin."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Yes, Paladin."

Both gulp their drinks.

The Female Paladin: "...Ahhh!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "You're a good drinker!"

The Female Paladin: "That's my line! You're really good at this!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hahaha, that's because I'm a mercenary. A strong sword hand, a stomach for violence, a reckless heart. After those three, the most important thing is a good liver for alcohol."

The Female Paladin: "Ahahahaha! Let's have another!"

East Fortress Base Commander: (*small voice*) "Hey, umm."

The Chief Maid: (*small voice*) "Yes?"

East Fortress Base Commander: (*small voice*) "Like before, please."

The Chief Maid: (*small voice*) "I'll dilute it with water so it should be alright. The Female Paladin is laughing too hard to notice."

East Fortress Base Commander: (*small voice*) "Yeah."

The Chief Maid: (*small voice*) "But if you passed her on to the Hero, I'm sure you could make your escape."

The Female Paladin: "Base Commander! What do the streets of the City of the Gate look like?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "The City of the Gate?"

The Female Paladin: "That's right. I'd like to know." *Smiles.*

East Fortress Base Commander: "Let's see. Lately, the number of people has increased greatly."

At first it was mainly just travelling merchants but recently, the people who fled have started to come back in great numbers. There are even new emigrants, human merchants too."

The Female Paladin: "Humans? Entering through the large hole in the gate? I always thought they weren't distributing exit permits anywhere... Ahh, this is delicious! This *kushiyaki!*"

East Fortress Base Commander: "You know what merchants are like. Whether or not they have a permit, as long as there's a chance for business, they'll definitely go."

The Female Paladin: "Hehehehe, secret business transactions?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "...That may be so."

The Female Paladin: "Hm?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "So that's the Hero?"

The Female Paladin: "Is something wrong?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "No, no. It's just that the Black Knight, even when he's drinking, is someone I can tell is incredibly powerful, but to think that he's actually the Hero!"

The Female Paladin: "Yeah. He's the Hero. He's unfairly strong. He can shoot laser beams anywhere at random and destroy towers with a swing of his sword."

East Fortress Base Commander: "That seems like an urban legend to me."

The Female Paladin: "...But he's a great master."

East Fortress Base Commander: "I see..."

The Female Paladin: "Hm?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Paladin."

East Fortress Base Commander: “You have a very mesmerised gaze whenever you look at the Hero!”

The Female Paladin: “What? That’s not— That’s probably true.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “So, I guess you’re all Demons then.”

The Female Paladin: “Why would you say that?”

East Fortress Base Commander: “The Black Knight came into the City and made a proclamation to all the inhabitants. He said, ‘All those Humans who despise Demons, come! In their place, I will be beaten by you.’ ‘All those Demons who bear grudges against Humans, come! In their place, bear that grudge against me.’”

The Female Paladin: “...I see.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “What’s going on?”

The Female Paladin: “No, the world above is also very chaotic. The Demon-despising Central Continent is locked in conflict against the Tripartite Union. Though we all want peace, we live in an age where we must all bear arms.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “That isn’t something which we can help. It’s because we live in such chaotic times. Those who do not bear arms are just stupid. Those who try not to inconvenience the enemies in front of them by being unprepared and unarmed aren’t kind, they are merely sick in the head.”

The Female Paladin: “—That’s true.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “But constantly raising our weapons isn’t right either, right? This is a very conflicting time. But if someone great and noble were to come, he could probably take the weapons from them and create peace throughout the world. But that’s like how a mother or a father would break up children’s fights by sending them to the naughty corner. Can we really call that peace?”

The Female Paladin: “...”

East Fortress Base Commander: "Well, I think there's a better way to do this."

The Female Paladin: "You think it's possible?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "To co-exist with Demons?"

The Female Paladin: "Yeah... I want to believe it, but I really can't."

East Fortress Base Commander: "I think it's possible."

The Female Paladin: "Do you? Really?!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "I'm sure you know that there's already a gaping hole where there was the gate. It's currently still a trickle, but it's already becoming impossible to stem the tide. We have to co-exist. We absolutely need to co-exist. If you looked at the City of the Gate, you would immediately understand. Yeah, we can definitely co-exist. Demons and Humans aren't that different, after all."

The Female Paladin: "Really... Well, that's just the dream of the Hero and the Demon King."

The Mage: "...The problem is the threshold of acceptable losses."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Yeah."

The Female Paladin: "Really?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "We'll definitely eventually co-exist. I can guarantee that. The problem is, in order to achieve this, how much blood needs to be shed? We will co-exist eventually, but whether that takes five years, ten years, a hundred years... I don't know. The amount of blood that will be lost could be many times more than what has already been spilt so far. There may even be a chance that the all the blood of all the Demons and Humans needs to be sacrificed. We can co-exist, but whether Demons or Humans can remain in existence is a different problem."

The Female Paladin: "Is that so..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "It may be narrow, but that's a mercenary's point of view. Tomorrow may come but how much blood will be spilt today?"

The Mage: "For the sake of time..."

The Female Paladin: "Mage..."

The Mage: "Can you hear their pleas?"

----- ***The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in a Large Tatami-floored Room, a Peaceful Place***

Aide-de-Camp: "Delicious, what is this?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Is it a vegetable?"

Little Sister Maid: "It's a carrot."

Aide-de-Camp: "Since when do carrots taste so sweet?!"

Little Sister Maid: "It should be, I think it was boiled in honey."

Aide-de-Camp: "This is my first time eating something like this."

Elder Sister Maid: "Me too."

Little Sister Maid: "Me three ~♪"

Aide-de-Camp: "Yeah, everyone is really wonderful."

Elder Sister Maid: "Really?"

Little Sister Maid: "You mean the Hero? Or the Demon King?"

Aide-de-Camp: "No, no, everybody is amazing."

Elder Sister Maid: "I don't really think so, though..."

Little Sister Maid: "Hey, hey. This is really delicious!"

Aide-de-Camp: "Which?"

Little Sister Maid: "This red stick-like thing."

Aide-de-Camp: "Yeah, that's a Giant Spider Crab. If you break it, it's delicious in the middle."

Elder Sister Maid: "Whoa... Give me some too."

Little Sister Maid: "Hehe, let's eat."

Sound of crab cracking.

Aide-de-Camp: "Let's eat our fill and just relax, alright?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes."

Little Sister Maid: "Alright!"

----- ***The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in a Large Tatami-floored Room***



East Fortress Base Commander: "Wine! Wine! Wine is the tears of men ~♪"

The Demon King: "Hmm, Hero."

The Hero: "What?"

The Demon King: "Are you drinking?"

The Hero: "I'm drinking."

The Demon King: "I'm drinking too."

The Hero: "I know."

The Demon King: "No, I know that you know."

The Hero: "What kind of routine is this?"

The Demon King: "No, I just wanted to confirm that I know that you know that I know that you know that I know that you know."

The Hero: "That is incredibly confusing."

The Demon King: "Yeah, who comes up with such confusing things."

The Hero: "You came up with it, didn't you?!"

The Demon King: "Most economies based solely on consumer durables and capital goods have limitations to their growth."

The Hero: "This just got a lot more complicated."

The Demon King: "Hero."

The Hero: "Y-yes?"

The Demon King: "Hero. Hero. Hero."

The Hero: "Thrice in a row?"

The Demon King: "Surp."

The Hero: "Surp?"

The Demon King: "Surprise attack!" *Collapses.*

The Hero: "?!"

The Demon King: "N-no way. I won't let... you..."

The Hero: "...Umm."

The Chief Maid: "My, my. She's really into your lap pillow."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "Are you asleep, Demon King?"

The Demon King: "... Mmm... Mmm..."

The Chief Maid: "Is she asleep?"

The Hero: "Looks like it."

The Chief Maid: "She's very deep in... She's asleep like a *tanuki*."

The Demon King snores lightly.

The Hero: "?"

The Chief Maid: "Hero, would you mind taking the Demon King up to her room for me?"

The Hero: "Yeah, sure."

The Chief Maid: "I'm counting on you, then." *Smiles.*

----- ***The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in a Large Guest Room***

Door opens.

The Hero: "...Alright."

The Demon King: "...Mmmm."

The Hero: "Wow, this is... amazing. I don't really understand, but the bed is attached to the ceiling."

The Demon King: "...Mmm."

The Hero: "Okay, okay... This bed is just about as big as a regular-sized room. What kind of mattress is this? Even though she looks this way, the Demon King is the Demon King after all. She's got to be unbelievably rich."

The Demon King: "Ehhh."

The Hero: "Did I wake you?"

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "Are you feeling alright? Do you want to go to the toilet?"

The Demon King: "...Ugh."

The Hero: "If you need to vomit, don't vomit on me, alright?"

The Demon King: "Umm, that's..." (*Chief Maid, how am I supposed to create a good mood when he says something like that?!*)

The Demon King: "Mmm, I'm alright... I'd just like to sit up for a while."

The Hero: "Yeah, got it."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "You really drank quite a bit."

The Demon King: "Yeah, it's been a while. It was fun!"

The Hero: "That's good."

The Demon King: "Hero."

The Hero: "What?"

The Demon King: "Do I have the right to act like your legal owner?"

The Hero: "Huh? I guess?"

The Demon King: "Really? Hehehe, in that case."

The Hero: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "Take off your shoes... please?"

The Hero: "Y-yeah..."

The Demon King: "Hurry up!"

The Hero: "Don't rush me, it'll get dirty."

The Demon King: "Hmph."

The Hero: "Is this enough?"

The Demon King: "How fun!" *Rolls around.*

The Hero: "Stop rolling around."

The Demon King: "This bed is so big, I can even jump around in it."

The Hero: "Yes, yes."

The Demon King: "Didn't you drink anything?"

The Hero: "I drank, but I didn't drown myself like you did. To begin with, I know I'm not particularly good at controlling my liquor intake."

The Demon King: "Really? How boring."

The Hero: "Why?"

The Demon King: "It would be fun if you were drunk too."

The Hero: "What?"

The Demon King: "We can talk about employment rates, efficiency, and even the relationship between revenue and cost. How interesting. Hehehehehe."

The Hero: "I don't understand."

The Demon King: "Hahahahahaha."

The Hero: "You really are drunk, aren't you?"

The Demon King: "I was born to be drunk. If I don't get drunk, then I'll be wasting the efforts of the brewers, right? That's why it's the economically right thing to get drunk! Otherwise it's just wastage!!!"

The Hero: "That's not entirely wrong."

The Demon King shivers.

The Hero: "?"

The Demon King shivers.

The Hero: "Come over here, won't you?"

The Demon King: "Really?"

The Hero: "It's fine."

Shuffles over.

The Demon King: "Hero."

The Hero: "That's me."

The Demon King: "How nice. You're warm. You have a very good heart."

The Hero: "You drunkard."

The Demon King: "Ahh! I want to praise myself. How did I manage to pick such a great people to surround myself with. My people-judging abilities truly are a joy to behold."

The Hero: "I suppose I don't have such joy."

The Demon King: "That's not true."

The Hero: "Really?"

The Demon King: "I mean, that time, you chose me..."

The Hero: "Y-yeah..."

The Demon King: "You're really smart. Really? If you were really that smart, then why do I have to keep trying so hard? Why can't you be as smart all the time as you were back then?"

The Hero: "Uhhh."

The Demon King: "If you just did that, everything would be fine."

The Hero: "Thank you."

The Demon King: "No, I belong to you after all."

The Hero: "Y-yeah..."

The Demon King: "...."

The Hero: "...How about you come closer?"

The Demon King: "You don't want me to leave?"

The Hero: "Absolutely... not."

The Demon King: "That's my Hero." *Sinks into bed.*

The Hero: "That looks fun."

The Demon King: "It is."

The Hero: "Somehow."

The Demon King: "Shall we roll around?"

The Hero: "Eh?"

The Demon King: "We can roll around and talk for a while. We'll have to go back eventually, right? I'm not sleepy or anything, so just for a bit?"

The Hero: "Umm."

The Demon King: "Don't worry about space, it's very big."

The Hero: "Uhh."

The Demon King: "No...?"

The Hero: "It's very hard to refuse when you say it like that."

The Demon King: "Hmm, I learnt that if I tilt my head slightly to the side and make an expression as if I'm going to cry, the persuasiveness increases exponentially."

The Hero: "...You're just exploiting me again."

The Demon King: "I understand! Sorry! I apologise! I won't do it again. Promise!"

The Hero: "Hmph, I've got to keep my guard up."

The Demon King: "No you don't, I'm just rolling around."

The Hero: "I don't have any complaints with you rolling around."

The Demon King: "It's fine. Why don't we roll around together?"

The Hero: "It's not that I hate rolling around or anything, but being here with you, it's very difficult to feel completely relaxed especially in this situation."

The Demon King: "What a difficult age you are at."

The Hero: "I just want to live normally, why must it be so difficult?"

The Demon King: "Here, look, I made you some space."

The Hero: "Fine."

Jumps onto the bed.

The Demon King: "Stretch out your legs."

The Hero: "Why?"

The Demon King: "So I can take off your shoes."

The Hero: "It's fine! I'll take it off myself!"

The Demon King: "Come on, I said I'd take it off. I don't know if it's the right feeling, but it's got a certain forbidden feel to it, doesn't it?"

The Hero: "I don't want to feel something so weird."

The Demon King: "But it's interesting."

The Hero: "It's not interesting at all."

Heavy footsteps.

The Hero: "Who's that?"

The Demon King: "Just a passerby."

Heavy footsteps.

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "..."

Heavy footsteps

The Hero: "...Why are you holding your breath?"

The Demon King: "...Why do you look so afraid of being caught with me?"

The Hero: "No, I'm not."

The Demon King: "Well, I'm acting normal too."

Heavy footsteps.

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "...It really is an oppressive feeling."

Door opens slowly.

The Hero: "?!"

----- ***The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in a Large Guest Room***

The Female Paladin: "Ummm, number seven... Number eight. Ahh, I really drank too much."

Gulps down another bottle of wine.

The Female Paladin: "Number nine... This is my room. Where's my luggage..."

Door opens slowly.

The Hero: “?!”

The Demon King: “...!!!”

The Female Paladin: “What! What are the two of you doing!”

The Hero: “What do you mean?”

The Demon King: “We’re having a tea party.”

The Female Paladin: “You’re always so shameless, Demon King!” *Launches herself.*

The Demon King: “You hit me?!”

The Hero: “Hey, calm down.”

The Demon King: “But! Hey! She did something like that to me even though she’s the one trespassing into my room at this ungodly hour!”

The Female Paladin: “Trespassing? Isn’t this room number nine? It’s my room.”

The Demon King: “What are you saying? Room number nine is mine!”

The Hero: “Really? I thought it was mine.”

The Demon King: “Don’t be foolish, let’s look into the closet. There, those are my bags. This is obviously my room.”

The Female Paladin: “Wait, that case over there is mine. That bag too. Why is my luggage in this room?”

The Demon King: “Then whose bathrobe is this?”

The Hero: “...Uhh, that’s mine.”

The Demon King: “...”

The Female Paladin: “So it’s a triple bedroom...”

The Hero: “Who allocated the rooms?!”

The Demon King: “It’s not like we have a shortage of rooms, what’s going on?”

The Female Paladin: "This atmosphere... It's like lions locked in a cage engaged in a fight to the death."

The Demon King: "...I'm the one getting invaded."

The Female Paladin: "What did you say?!"

The Demon King: "Nothing."

The Female Paladin: "But it's too late to divide the room, I'm way too sleepy."

The Hero: "That's true. Then the two of you can sleep together. I can sleep alone anyway. See you tomorrow." *Gets off bed.*

The Female Paladin and the Demon King: "Wait!!!"

----- ***The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in a Large Guest Room***

The Female Paladin: "—"

The Demon King: "—"

The Hero: "What is going on?"

The Demon King: "Hey, Hero, we need to talk about a lot of things."

The Female Paladin: "You didn't even apologise for coming late."

The Hero: "Eh?"

The Demon King: "The three of us are sleeping together. We've got wine and the night is still young."

The Female Paladin: "We're counting on you, Hero."

The Hero: "Wait, what?"

The Demon King: "I've got no problem with this, do you?"

The Female Paladin: "From the Church's point of view, this is probably a problem, but the Spirit of Light, in His unlimited charity, will probably let this slide. So I'll allow it this time."

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "Why are you sighing?"

The Female Paladin: "It's very weird that you're sighing."

The Hero: "It's not that I hate sleeping with the two of you, it's just that the atmosphere is really heavy!"

The Demon King: "Don't worry about that."

The Female Paladin: "We have a truce tonight."

The Hero: "Eh?"

The Demon King: "The Maid Chief said that fighting every day is counter-productive and uninteresting. That's why today, we're not fighting."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah, I won't fight with the Demon King as well. Don't worry. We won't talk very much and just sleep."

The Hero: "Really...?"

The Demon King: "Yes."

The Demon King: "All the rooms around here have a small bathroom attached to them.

I'm going to take a bath and change to something more comfortable. You can too."

The Female Paladin: "Really?"

The Demon King: "We're at a truce, so believe me. Well, those words were for the Hero as well."

Walks off.

The Female Paladin: “Don’t look so flustered, you’re my owner after all.”

The Hero: “It’s because the two of you fight so much!”

The Female Paladin: “It’s all because of you, though.”

The Hero: “I understand that, but—”

The Female Paladin: “How very Hero-like.”

The Hero: “Sigh...”

The Female Paladin: “Stop sighing... We’re here on holiday. That being said, there’s also some kind of Demon Conference going on too?”

The Hero: “Yeah, the Kurultai... Aren’t you sleepy?”

The Female Paladin: “Nope, I’m just really tipsy. I don’t want to move very much.”

The Hero: “Did you say something, Demon King?”

The Female Paladin: “You must be very tired. The Demon King didn’t say anything.”

The Hero: “I feel like I had some sort of important conversation recently...”

The Female Paladin: “I wouldn’t know anything about that.”

The Hero: “You seem very smug about that.”

The Female Paladin: “Even if you’re ignorant, I’ll still protect you.”

The Hero: “...”

The Female Paladin: “I just came, so I’m trying to learn as much as possible.”

The Hero: “Oh? You’ve been studying?”

The Female Paladin: “Of course I have. I tried to learn as much from the Base Commander as possible too... I’ve been studying so that I can decrease the number of unnecessary sacrifices we have to make.”

The Hero: "I see..."

The Female Paladin: "You know more about the Demon World than I do, right?"

The Hero: "I have some trivial knowledge, but I don't know anything about its institutions or groups. I haven't been on the ground long enough to acquire a familiarity with it either."

The Female Paladin: "That being said, I find the Demon World... Ugh... Ahh..."

The Hero: "What are you doing?"

The Female Paladin: "I'm trying to take off my armour."

The Hero: "..."

The Female Paladin struggles.

The Hero: "Let me help you."

The Female Paladin sighs.

The Hero: "—Well! I know that there are many different races and tribes, but apart from that, I'm not clear about the rest of it."

The Female Paladin: "From what I can tell, the ones who are really unintelligent are the Demon Beasts. In our world, they would be called animals. The Demons are the intelligent ones and they live in the cities and on their frontier."

The Hero: "The Kurultai is a gathering of all the heads of the Demon Races. It's a Conference during which many important things get decided."

The Female Paladin: "So, if they decide to, they could end the war with Humanity in that meeting?"

The Hero: "That would be great, but probably not."

Door opens.

The Demon King: "Ahh."

The Female Paladin: "That was quick?"

The Demon King: "I just went to take a quick shower to wash off the sweat."

The Female Paladin: "Then I'll take one too."

The Hero: "Bye."

The Demon King: "It's still warm."

Walks off.

The Hero: "We were talking about the Kurultai."

The Female Paladin: "Really? I see." *Frowns.*

The Hero: "Are you troubled?"

The Demon King: "I wouldn't say that I'm troubled, but the situation isn't good at all."

The Hero: "Yeah. You told me this a long time ago, but Demonkind is really a confederation of tribes, right?"

The Demon King: "I don't know."

The Hero: "Hey, hey, are you or aren't you sure?"

The Demon King: "They really come and go. To begin with, the definition of a tribe was originally a hazy concept. It wasn't based on race or anything. It was really just a name people identified themselves by. For instance, if a group of youngsters got together and decided they were a tribe, then they would be a tribe. — Of course, if you wanted to create a tribe, then you would have to leave the tribe you were originally in. Demon society revolved around tribes, so leaving the tribe you were in was a very courageous thing to do. But if you had the courage, anyone could do it."

The Hero: "And so the various races will be at this meeting?"

The Demon King: "They should."

The Hero: "That sounds like a very big meeting."

The Demon King: "Actually only the Demon King and the heads of eight races will take part."

The Hero: "Really?"

The Demon King: "Yeah. I said this earlier, but there are a lot of different Demon Races. We don't have an exact figure or anything, but of the intelligent Demons, 40% belong to a whole slew of different tribes. The remaining 60% belong to the eight largest Races. At this meeting, the Demon King represents the interests of those 40%. That's the idea anyway."

The Hero: "So that's how it is."

The Hero: "Then, who comes up with the Conference topic?"

The Demon King: "Basically, the Demon King. The other representatives are allowed to talk freely, but the Demon King goes first."

The Hero: "That sounds like a Human conference."

The Demon King: "It's a normal conference."

The Hero: "So, what happens if someone objects to the contents of the discussion?"

The Demon King: "We discuss further until no one objects."

The Hero: "Is that really possible?"

The Demon King: "We'll discuss for as long as it takes. There were cases where a single topic was discussed for a whole month."

The Hero: "I see... I can't really imagine it, though."

The Demon King: "The conference will go back and forth for several days. In that time, of course, different Races may conduct their own individual negotiations to defuse their disagreements as well, like presenting gifts to each other or arranging marriages. Sometimes they may even try a more forceful sort of pressure. Anything to resolve the disagreements."

The Hero: "Ahh, I see. It really is a conference between many factions."

The Demon King: "That's right. We slowly discuss and consolidate our positions and in the end, we issue a joint statement."

The Hero: "And what happens if we can't come to a conclusion or if the Conference is broken up before a conclusion is reached?"

The Demon King: "There has never been a precedent."

The Hero: "—?"

The Demon King: "Three hundred years ago, at the Kurultai of the Hell King of the Biting Tortoise Tribe, the Chief of the Fang Tribe opposed his views."

The Hero: "You see, there was a precedent!"

The Demon King: "The Hell King exterminated the entire race, turning them all into ash. In the end, the Kurultai concluded with everybody in agreement."

Door opens.

The Female Paladin: "What a nice bath."

The Hero: "Welcome back."

The Female Paladin: "Shall we continue where we left off?"

The Hero: "I've just been hearing about it, but the world above is really different from down here, after all."

The Female Paladin: "I see..."

The Demon King: "Come under the covers."

The Hero: "You're already under the covers."

The Demon King: "I'm not in a rush or anything."

The Female Paladin: "The Hero goes in the middle."

The Hero: "Ummm."

The Demon King: "Hurry up and get in!"

The Female Paladin: "If you don't get in, I won't get in either."

The Hero: "Fine." *Clammers into bed.*

The Demon King: "This is very nice."

The Hero: "It's my first time being in a bed attached to the ceiling."

The Female Paladin: "This is called a canopy, right?"

The Demon King: "We were talking about the Kurultai."

The Female Paladin: "It seems like such a bother."

The Hero: "This really isn't a straight piece of rope. So the Demon King is expected to exterminate entire races and turn them into ash for disagreeing?"

The Demon King: "I don't have that power, and I wouldn't want to do it in any case."

The Female Paladin: "Why don't they just come up with conditional offers, or talk it out?"

The Demon King: "Well, the exterminating thing has probably only happened to one race."

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "What's wrong, Hero?"

The Hero: "Ah, no. I met a lot of different people in the Demon World, I wonder which Tribes they were from."

The Demon King: "There are really a lot of tribes."

The Female Paladin: "I only see Demons on the battlefield, it's quite unbelievable to think they have families too."

The Demon King: "A Demon would find it unbelievable that Humans have families, since most Demons have never seen a Human before."

The Hero: "That's true."

The Demon King: "..." Yawns.

The Female Paladin: "You look sleepy."

The Demon King: "A bit."

The Female Paladin: "Shall we go to bed?"

The Hero: "We can continue our conversation tomorrow."

The Demon King: "Good idea, Hero."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah, Hero."

The Hero pulls the sheets up.

The Female Paladin: "It's good that we aren't fighting, isn't it?"

The Demon King: "Maybe the Hero is only satisfied when there are people fighting over him."

The Hero: "...Weren't we going to sleep?"

The Female Paladin: "I'm going to sleep so I need some warmth."

The Demon King: "I can't sleep when I'm this relaxed."

The Hero: "This is a very difficult atmosphere."

The Female Paladin: "Difficult? Master, are you hurting anywhere?"

The Demon King: "If there were any kind of problem, don't you think I would resolve it immediately."

The Hero: "Stop it."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah, yeah, stop it."

The Demon King: "You're still as fluffy as ever, Hero."

The Hero: "I should probably still count myself lucky, but—"

The Female Paladin: "That's why you need to hurry up and make a decision."

The Demon King: "If you keep this up, you'll just lose the both of us, Hero."

----- *The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in a Guest Room*

Little Maid Sister: "..."

Elder Maid Sister: "... ..."

Little Maid Sister: "Ah, Sis!"

Elder Maid Sister: "..."

Little Maid Sister: "Sis, Sis!" *Shakes sister.*

Elder Maid Sister: "..."

Little Maid Sister: "It's morning, we should make breakfast."

Elder Maid Sister: "..."

Little Maid Sister: "We could make bread, or sweet potatoes."

Elder Maid Sister: "..."

Takes out bread.

Little Maid Sister: "Here look, it's some delicious bread... Can you smell it?"

Elder Maid Sister: "Hey—We're on vacation today."

Little Maid Sister: "Really?"

Elder Maid Sister: "... ..."

Little Maid Sister: "Wh-what! There's breakfast prepared for us!"

Elder Maid Sister: "... ..."

Little Maid Sister: "What should I do? I didn't make it, but there's breakfast. What should I do? Sis, it's breakfast!"

Elder Maid Sister: "...There should be. We would be hungry without it."

Little Maid Sister: "Really?"

Elder Maid Sister: "..."

Little Maid Sister: "That's true now that I think about it."

Elder Maid Sister: "..."

Brings breakfast over.

Little Maid Sister: "What a nice smell." *Inhales deeply.*

Little Maid Sister: "What's this... Ah, there's black bread, and white bread, and bacon with eggs, and some kind of yellow fruit, and what's this... Oh it's fried potatoes ♪"

Elder Maid Sister: "Mmmm." *Gets up.*

Little Maid Sister: "Oh, you're awake! Let's eat! Let's eat!"

Elder Maid Sister: "That looks amazing." *Smiles.*

Little Maid Sister: "Shall we eat?"

Elder Maid Sister: "Let's go wash up first."

Volume 2 Chapter 8, “If you don’t give up, definitely.”

——— ***The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in a Hotspring in the Morning***

Steam rises.

East Fortress Base Commander: “Hey.”

The Hero: “Hey, what’s up.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “What’s up with you? You’ve got a very unpleasant expression on your face. Didn’t you sleep?”

The Hero: “Well, lots of things happened...”

East Fortress Base Commander: “I see. Lots of things happened.”

The Hero: “...Even though they’re enemies with each other...”

East Fortress Base Commander: “There are many battles no matter where one is. Taadaa!”

The Hero: “What’s that?”

East Fortress Base Commander: “Wine. I helped myself to some.”

The Hero: “You’re drinking so early in the morning?”

East Fortress Base Commander: “I’m drinking because it’s so early in the morning, it makes it especially delicious.”

The Hero: “Well, that’s some reasoning.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “Here, have some.”

Pours out wine.

The Hero: “Right, just a cup then.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “Cheers!”

The Hero and the East Fortress Base Commander: "Ahhhh!"

The Hero: "What snacks do you have to go with this wine?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Well, I've got some barbecued fish and some pickled vegetables."

The Hero: "They look good."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Eat up, eat up."

The Hero: "Ahh... Thank you."

East Fortress Base Commander: "So, what's the situation?"

The Hero: "With what?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Which one is the first wife?"

The Hero: "Eh? What are you talking about?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "You said this was a family vacation."

The Hero: "I said it *looked like* a family vacation."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Heh."

The Hero: "Wh-what's that mean?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Stop hiding."

The Hero: "I'm not hiding anything."

Bubbling sound.

The Mage: "...How very interesting."

The Hero: "What?!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Where are you?"

The Mage: "...I'm submerged."

East Fortress Base Commander: “Is that the Mage?”

East Fortress Base Commander: (*small voice*) “What sort of human is she?”

The Hero: “She’s that kind of person. She’s very elusive, but she’s not a bad person. Though her heart isn’t usually in the right place...”

The Mage: “...The struggle for the place of the first wife. What an extremely dramatic tale.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “Umm, what sort of reaction should I have?”

The Hero: “Don’t ask me.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “So the Demon King is your first wife?”

The Hero: “Definitely not!”

The Mage: “...Don’t you have a relationship closer than a first wife’s?”

The Hero: “Why are you in here anyway? This is the men’s bath.”

The Mage: “...This is the mixed bath. That’s the rumour anyway.”

The Hero: “There’s no mixed bath over here. Don’t you find this indecent?”

The Mage: “...There won’t be a problem if I use camouflage magic.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “You’ve got a lot of squares flickering on your skin.”

The Hero: “What are you camouflaging?”

The Mage: “...The gradients are a bit thin, I suppose.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “How very, very interesting.”

The Hero: “The Mage is incredibly proficient in magic. She has more magic in her little pinky than a Master-class mage has.”



Squares on Skin: This refers to a mosaic. From a legal standpoint, mosaics can be applied to film media in order to provide privacy for the person in the film. Within the area, colours are blended so that specific shapes are difficult to make out without obscuring the colour palette of the image jarringly.

East Fortress Base Commander: “Incredible!”

The Mage: “Not really.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “Ahh, to sit in a bath all afternoon drinking wine, what a way to divorce ourselves from the trivial fetters of this transient life.”

The Hero: “Hmm.”

TL Explanation

Blue Ass: This needs some explanation. The Japanese proverbial expression ‘to have a blue ass’ refers to being young and inexperienced. A young baby is born with a blue ass, hence the expression.

The Mage: “...You aren’t eager to divorce yourself? Is your ass still blue?”

The Hero: “It’s already no longer blue.”

The Mage: “...If it was red you would be a baboon.” *Heeheehee.*

East Fortress Base Commander: “What’s wrong? Is something up?”

The Hero: "Yeah, well..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "What is it?"

The Hero: "Do you know about the Kurultai?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Yeah, it's a massive conference... The Demon King and that beautiful lady were discussing it last night. That being said, even a four year old in the Demon World would know that by now."

The Hero: "Is that so?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Is something wrong with the Kurultai?"

The Hero: "I'm trying to find a route at that conference to suggest peaceful co-existence with humanity, but I'm not certain how that will turn out."

East Fortress Base Commander: "That's probably impossible, right?"

The Hero: "Eh?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Well, this Kurultai is meant to decide how best to invade the Human World after all."

The Hero: "Who said that?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Everyone says that."

The Hero: "Well, that's a misunderstanding. The Demon King doesn't want such a thing. Even if we can't achieve everlasting peace and joint prosperity, we'll get a ceasefire, or at the very least we'll make sure we don't obliterate each other."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Well, yes, I know that's what she wants from our talk yesterday. But don't you think it's impossible with this Kurultai?"

The Hero: "What?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "The whole Demon World is abuzz with chatter, everyone is asking, '*How far into the Demon World are we going to invade this time?*' and all their intentions are centred around that."

I wouldn't say everyone wants a war to take place, but with rumours flowing the way they do, it would be a very good time for anyone who did want a war. Those people will definitely make use of this flow."

The Hero: "..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "A war is a grave event involving large amounts of weaponry and people, but even an 'atmosphere' which cannot be quantified in such a simple manner can be a very grave event as well. It is this atmosphere which can cause large-scale defeats for an army. A mercenary who has lived a long time understands the stench of this reality. This is the precise reason why there is no place for a mercenary in a defeated army after all."

The Hero: "...Yeah."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Furthermore, the Eight Great Demon Tribes."

The Hero: "?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "The Tribe of Fiends, the Demons of the Pale, the Tribe of Giants, the Tribe of Dragons."

The Mage: "...The Tribe of the Fang, the Tribe of Banshees, the Tribe of Fairies, and the Automatons."

The Hero: "Are those the Eight Great Demon Tribes?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Didn't you know? Well, in any case, out of these Eight Great Demon Tribes, probably... only the Fairies want peace with the Humans."

The Hero: "Eh?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Only the Fairy Tribe wants peace with the Humans."

The Hero: "But there are a lot of different Tribes in the City of the Gate, right? And the Fire Dragon Lady wants peace with the Humans as well, right?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "That's really on an individual basis. There're a lot of different kinds of people from everywhere. There are even those who are content to sit on the fence. If they have to co-exist with humans, then they don't mind. In the City of the Gate, at the very least, we co-exist superficially. But just how deep this goes is a different subject altogether. The truth is that we aren't actually co-existing, but let's not go into such sad topics just yet. In any case, you have to consider that there are very few members in the co-existence faction, and what you are going to do with that?"

The Hero: "...That's..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "From what I hear from the Fire Dragon Lady, the Fire Dragon Race may be stubborn, but they're not stupid. Most Dragons live in the highlands and mountainsides, at high altitudes where they do not come into much contact with the other Demon Races. Rather than co-existence, what they really want is to be left alone.

"However, there are massive veins of metals sleeping under the mountains where the Dragon Races reside. There are also large deposits of extremely pure iron, which is rare in the Demon World, in the mountains where the Dragon Races live. Living in such places, it is impossible not to run into trouble. That's why they are willing to send the Lady all alone to learn about the world outside and how to manage it. Of course, the Fire Dragon Lady can prove her mettle by her character alone too."

The Hero: "I see."

The Mage: "...The domestic situation for each of the Tribes is similarly complex."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Yes, you could say that."

The Hero: "How so?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Consider the existence of Races within Tribes. Tribes are divided into smaller Races. For example, the Dragon Lady belongs to the Dragon Tribe, but within that, she is the daughter of the ruling nobility of the

Fire Dragon Race. There are other Races like the Cloud Dragon Race or the Stone Dragon Race.”

The Hero: “How complex.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “Well, they’re living things, so it can’t be helped.”

The Hero: “...”

East Fortress Base Commander: “What?”

The Hero: “But we need to do something.”

The Mage: “...”

East Fortress Base Commander: “Hmm.”

The Hero: “...”

East Fortress Base Commander: “We could use yours and the Demon King’s incredible destructive abilities... But that’s probably not good.”

The Hero: “Yeah.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “That would be like getting punched by your father.”

The Hero: “Exactly. As much as possible, I would like to resolve this without having to do anything drastic.”

The Mage: “...”

East Fortress Base Commander: “I’m not even certain what you should say. You should probably look for other Tribes like the Dragon Tribe, who aren’t opposed to co-existence but are looking to pursue a middle ground for their own advantage. However, I don’t have friends like the Fire Dragon Lady there, so I’m not sure about the situations in those Tribes.”

The Hero: “Yeah.”

East Fortress Base Commander: "It would probably be very helpful if we researched about all the different Tribes."

The Hero: "Indeed."

The Mage: "...Book of Statutes."



Statutes: These are directives for governments to follow set by previous governments. In Japan, the Imperial Household Law of 1947 sets rules for the Emperor of Japan such as how to determine the order of succession to the Chrysanthemum Throne.

East Fortress Base Commander: "?"

The Hero: "Did you say something, Mage?"

The Mage:..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Huh?"

The Hero: "Can you check it out?"

The Mage nods.

The Hero: "I don't really understand but you can check this Book of Statutes thing? I'm really bad at researching things."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hahahahaha, so am I."

The Mage:..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Well, it's fine, I'll get my Aide-de-Camp on it."

The Hero: "I'm sorry."

East Fortress Base Commander: "No, it's fine. We might not be able to avoid war, but if we work hard on this, I'm sure it won't go to waste. If we can reduce the number of Tribes taking part in the war by just one race, even if we went to war, we would dramatically reduce the number of blades on the battlefield and help sow some doubt into the situation as well. I would be willing to do anything to help you in this endeavour."

—— The Backyard of *The Demon King* Hotsprings Villa, the Route to the Kitchen

Elder Sister Maid: "What a feast!"

Little Sister Maid: "What a feast~ ♪"

Elder Sister Maid: "Where should I put the tableware?"

Little Sister Maid: "If you just leave it in the house, we won't be able to get the oil out easily."

Elder Sister Maid: "I see. You're very good at this."

Little Sister Maid: "Hehe— ♪"

Household Fairy chirps.

Elder Sister Maid: "Eh?"

Little Sister Maid: "Ah, how cute!"

Household Fairy chirps.

Little Sister Maid: "There's so much!"

Elder Sister Maid: "These are... potatoes, cereal, milk? They're carrying all this?"

Little Sister Maid: "They're carrying our food—"

Household Fairy: "We bring food. Humans. So small. Hungry?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Umm, we just ate."

Little Sister Maid: "And what a feast it was. ♪"

Household Fairy: "*Chirp*. You smell like potatoes. *Chirp*. Was it delicious?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes, it was delicious!"

Little Sister Maid: "The bacon and eggs were delicious too!"

Household Fairy: "*Chirp, chirp*. Take this."

Elder Sister Maid: "What's... this?"

Little Sister Maid: "It smells sweet!"

Household Fairy: "*Chirp*. It's a Princess Apple. *Chirp*. From a good region. For lunch, we'll have twenty types of cheese with fruits."

Elder Sister Maid: "Wow."

Little Sister Maid: "Amazing! Amazing!"

Household Fairy chirps.

Little Sister Maid: "What a small person."

Elder Sister Maid: "...Yeah. She looks like a cute and nice person."

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah!"

— — — ***The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in a Gazebo in the Courtyard***

The Female Paladin: "Like this? Ah, wrong... like this?"

The Female Paladin: "L-like this?!"

The Hero: "...What are you doing?"

The Female Paladin: “H-Hero?!”

The Hero: “What are you doing?”

The Female Paladin: “No, nothing much. Nothing important, anyway. I’m just doing some warm-ups, right?”

The Hero: “I see. I just came from the hotsprings myself, to think you would be so serious.”

The Female Paladin: “I’ve been told one should seize the day...”

The Hero: “?”

The Female Paladin: “Ah, no. Nothing. I’m just following advice from the Chief Maid to train up my body.”

The Hero: “I see.”

The Female Paladin: “...Especially around my chest area.”

The Hero: “Ahhh.”

The Female Paladin: “What’s wrong?”

The Hero: “No, I was being boiled in those hotsprings. It’s so hot.”

The Female Paladin: “Really? Shall I fan you?”

The Hero: “You brought a fan?”

The Female Paladin: “Of course. My master is here after all.”

The Hero: “...”

The Female Paladin: “Shall I?” *Smiles.*

The Hero: “What’s with that smug smile?! It’s making this fanning thing seem very scary!”

The Female Paladin: “But—”

The Hero: "It's fine, it's fine... I'll just take a break."

The Female Paladin: "R-really? Then should I bring you a cold beverage?"

The Hero: "Don't worry about it. Just carry on with your exercise."

The Female Paladin: "Ah, I can do that later."

The Hero: "Really?"

The Female Paladin: "Yeah... Can I sit next to you?"

The Hero: "Sure, go on."

The Female Paladin: "Alright."

The Hero: "Do you want to undress a bit, it's very hot."

The Female Paladin: "What are you saying? Stop making such shameless advances!"

The Hero: "...You were the one making shameless advances last night."

The Female Paladin: "When I'm together with the Demon King... I feel like I have to best her as my rival, so I may cross a few boundaries then."

The Hero: "I don't really get it."

The Female Paladin: "That's okay."

The Hero: "Really?"

The Female Paladin: "..."

Wind blows.

The Hero: "How cooling."

The Female Paladin: "It's usually colder than this."

The Hero: "Well, I just got out of the bath."

The Female Paladin: "You're unexpectedly bad at coping with the cold."

The Hero: "Hotsprings sure are great."

The Female Paladin: "Hmm?"

The Hero: "Hotsprings are so great. Everyone can really get together and have fun."

The Female Paladin: "Indeed."

The Hero: "It's also great that we can eat in such nice rooms. Even getting drunk and collapsing all over the place is really fun as well."

The Female Paladin: "Really?"

The Hero: "Getting into the bath early in the morning, having a scrumptious breakfast when I feel hungry, it's really the best thing that could ever happen!"

The Female Paladin: "Oh dear, you're becoming a glutton just like the Little Maid Sister."

The Hero: "Is that bad? ...If I don't eat, I can't get my Mana up."

The Female Paladin: "That being said, it was like that in the old days, too. The Mage was like that as well... Is food connected to Mana?"

The Hero: "That's probably so, it's some kind of fuel, I think."

The Female Paladin: "I can sort of understand that."

Wind blows.

The Hero: "Eh?"

The Female Paladin: "I'm having so much fun with everybody. It's so wonderful that there is this many people in my life. Those stupid disciples and that pervy old man as well."

The Hero: "Yeah."

The Female Paladin: "It's fun, and I'm so happy."

The Hero: "Yeah."

The Female Paladin: "...Yeah."

The Hero: "As expected—"

The Female Paladin: "?"

The Hero: "We have to negotiate at the Kurultai, but I'm bad at that."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah."

The Hero: "One could say that the Demon King doesn't want the war to return. Actually, she definitely doesn't... Even for someone like me, who has been slaying Demons left, right and centre, I can understand this emotion."

The Female Paladin: "My hands, too, are stained with blood."

The Hero: "...That's true."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah."

The Hero: "The Demon King doesn't have as much blood on her hands as we do."

The Female Paladin: "...Yeah."

The Hero: "Not that there's a second part to that statement or anything."

The Female Paladin: "Is that so? ...In that case, let me say it for you."

The Hero: "Eh?"

The Female Paladin: "A friend who hopes for peace. A friend who doesn't want war. Even though her hands are still not stained with so much blood, that's enough justification for me and for her to be on the battlefield. I am the Female Paladin. I like to think I am a loyal disciple of the Spirit, and one who is willing to walk along a cruel, blood-stained path is not one whom the Spirit will possibly endorse."

The Hero: "That's a very cool thing to say!"

The Female Paladin: "That's really something coming from you."

The Hero: "O-oh?"

The Female Paladin: "In any case, I have decided that I will help the Demon King. I don't understand this very well, but can the Kurultai really suppress the other Demon Tribes?"

The Hero: "Leave it to me!"

The Female Paladin: "I'm stupid, so I probably can't help you with anything, but!"

The Hero: "Oh come on!"

The Female Paladin: "You can always count me for anything, master!"

— -- *The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, on a Terrace*

Elder Sister Maid: "I have brought you some tea."

The Chief Maid: "Thank you."

Elder Sister Maid: "You're welcome... It's quiet here."

The Chief Maid: "Yeah."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Little Sister Maid: "～♪"

The Chief Maid: "And what are you doing?"

Little Sister Maid: "I'm writing my diary—"

The Chief Maid: "Diary?"

Elder Sister Maid: "She's been writing a lot lately."

Little Sister Maid: "Hehe."

The Chief Maid: "Very good. If you write every day, the words will stay with you."

Elder Sister Maid: "...Umm."

The Chief Maid: "?"

Elder Sister Maid: "How about all the pictures she draws..."

Little Sister Maid: "I can't do without them!"

The Chief Maid: "There are pictures in your diary?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Tada ~ ♪ This is the soup we had yesterday!"

The Chief Maid: "Well, well."

Elder Sister Maid: "Did you like it that much?"

Little Sister Maid: "I did! There was vinegar in it too."

The Chief Maid: "Wow, the recipe too? Who did you get it from?"

Little Sister Maid: "That black, gloomy lady taught it to me ~ ♪"

Elder Sister Maid: "Eh?"

Little Sister Maid: "She also taught me how to marinate the meat in vinegar for grilling!" *Flip, flip.*

The Chief Maid: "...This girl can really surprise me sometimes."

Elder Sister Maid: "I'm always afraid of what she'll come up with next..."

Little Sister Maid: "Yayyy!"

The Chief Maid: "Hahaha, you've done a lot of research into food, then?"

Little Sister Maid: "Yes. I write everyday about the yummy food we eat."

The Chief Maid: "It's good to write about things other than cooking."

Little Sister Maid: "Really?"

The Chief Maid: "The memory of a taste is an impression. Even if you wrote down that strong, vivid impression you had from this morning, you still wouldn't be able to summon up that emotion just from writing."

Little Sister Maid: "I see! Well, I also wrote down the lyrics to the song that the Female Paladin was singing~♪"

Elder Sister Maid: "I think I'd much rather forget that."

— -- *The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in a Large Room*

East Fortress Base Commander: "I always thought that beef was tough and difficult to eat, but this is really delicious."

Little Sister Maid: "This is beef?"

The Chief Maid: "Indeed."

Aide-de-Camp: "It's less chewy than pork and much softer."

Little Sister Maid: "Eh? Why is it so soft?"

The Chief Maid: "Usually, beef is tough because cows do a lot of work and build muscle. This is veal."

The Hero: "Oh, is that so?"

The Female Paladin: "Hmm, this is an interesting taste."

East Fortress Base Commander: "I like it a lot. I bet this would taste great as *kushiyaki*, with some rock salt to taste."

Aide-de-Camp: "That would be nice, I like these *dango* as well. They're floating in the soup so adorably."

Elder Sister Maid: "But why don't we usually eat beef?"

The Demon King: "That's a productivity issue. Compared to horses, cows are more obedient and are hence vital partners on the farm. They till the land and pull the bullock carts. They may be slower than horses, but far more powerful."

"As for consumption, compared to killing them for their meat, milking them is more valuable in the long term for many farmers. Unlike pigs, they also do not reproduce in litters, hence a cow which provides milk for a family can easily be considered a member of that family."

The Hero: "I see."

The Female Paladin: "That makes a lot of sense."

East Fortress Base Commander: "The ground is so much more fertile here in the Demon World compared to up there."

Aide-de-Camp: "It sure is!"

Elder Sister Maid: "Demon World?"

The Demon King: "Crap."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Should I not have said that?"

The Hero: "They still don't know."

The Chief Maid: "Oh dear."

The Female Paladin: "So that's how it is."

The Hero: "Female Paladin, I'm sure you can appreciate how delicate this is."

The Female Paladin: "Leave it to me."

The Hero: "Please handle this well."

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Demon King: "Should we just tell them the truth?!"

The Female Paladin: "This is the No.1 Resort in all the Demon World."

The Chief Maid: "That's true, it's definitely the most expensive."

The Female Paladin: "Your Mistress over there is the owner of the resort."

Elder Sister Maid: "She is?!"

The Demon King: "Uhh... Yeah..."

The Female Paladin: "That's why we're borrowing it."

Elder Sister Maid: "So that's what's going on. I knew the Mistress was some kind of noblewoman, but to think this is the fief which she owns."

Little Sister Maid: "Everything is delicious!"

The Chief Maid: "This is a very bizarre situation."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Well, it's to be expected in the Demon World."

Aide-de-Camp: "Are the two linked?"

Elder Sister Maid: "So she's a Demon Noble?"

The Demon King: "Uhh, yeah... You could say that..."

The Female Paladin: "To be more precise, she's the royalty."

Elder Sister Maid: "So you're the Demon King. I understand now. I've always heard people call you Maou-sama or Demon King, but I just didn't believe it until now."

Little Sister Maid: "What's going on?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Umm, well..."

Little Sister Maid: "?"

Elder Sister Maid: "The Mistress is the owner of a great city where a lot of wonderful food is being made. Apart from the castle we're in now, she also owns a lot of land in many places."

Little Sister Maid: "So she's rich~ ♪"

The Hero: "That's what's important to you?!"

The Demon King: "No, I'm not really rich... The castle is just something that has been passed down from generation to generation. With the inheritance tax from each generation steadily inflating, this is really beginning to cost me a lot of money..."

Elder Sister Maid: "So you're a noblewoman on hard times?"

Little Sister Maid: "I don't care what times you're on as long as there's good food."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Her true colours have finally shown, tiny lady."

Elder Sister Maid: "Well then, I'm sure dinner will be great."

Little Sister Maid: "Great?"

The Chief Maid: "It'll be another large banquet like yesterday."

Little Sister Maid: "Amazing! It's so great to be rich! You can always make such wonderful feasts~ ♪ Ahh, everyone in our house is such wonderful people."

The Demon King: "No. Umm. I didn't make it... And about the people? I'm just a....."

Elder Sister Maid: "Well, it doesn't matter if it's the Demon World or the Human World or whatever, the people are most important."

Little Sister Maid: "I knew you were someone great, but I didn't know you were so amazing! Wonderful! Make sure to teach me how to cook a lot of things!"

The Female Paladin: "...Hahahaha."

Aide-de-Camp: "Hahahahaha!"

Elder Sister Maid: "We'll try not to get in your way. We know you're busy."

Little Sister Maid: "Yep~♪"

The Chief Maid: "Well, well."

The Demon King: "I have no experience with this cooking thing..."

The Hero: "You seem too shocked for a Demon."

— -- ***The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, in the Hotsprings***

Steam rises...

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Wind blows...

The Chief Maid: "What a nice wind."

Elder Sister Maid: "Ah. Yes..."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

The Chief Maid: "..."

Wind blows...

The Chief Maid: "As expected, you're in shock."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

The Chief Maid: "We were never trying to lie to you or anything."

Elder Sister Maid: "That's not it. I'm just a bit surprised... My sister may look ditzy, but she's a very strong girl."

The Chief Maid: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Even if the Mistress is a Demon, and you and the Hero are also Demons, it still doesn't change the fact that you were the ones who saved us.

That night, without the warmth and the food that you provided for us, we would have starved to death. Not only that, you also gave purpose to our lives."

Elder Sister Maid: "But even so, I guess I'm still shocked."

The Chief Maid: "..."

Wind blows...

Elder Sister Maid: "Up till now, I still don't really know what war is, but I'm scared of it. That day, in the Kingdom of Metal, the one who tried to kill us was also from the Southern United Kingdoms... I will never forget those eyes, filled with insanity. They haunt me in my dreams at night. War is scary, it's insane... That's how I feel."

The Chief Maid: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "...But because Demons are Demons... If we think this way... Well, actually, most people think along these lines: War is something that should definitely not happen, but war with Demonkind is not war. Many people think that way. Even myself at times... That's why I'm shocked. I'd always believed that Demons were evil. But if you think about it, it can't possibly be so clear-cut. I'm shocked at my old way of thinking, and appalled by the hypocrisy."

The Chief Maid: "There is a limit to the generosity of Demons though."

Elder Sister Maid: "But, you're not evil... Because I know both you and the Mistress, I can say that with certainty."

Wind blows...

Elder Sister Maid: "A long time ago, I went to look for the Mistress."

Elder Sister Maid: "I asked her, 'What is war?'"

The Chief Maid: "..."

Wind blows...

Elder Sister Maid: "She answered, 'Let's say there are two village kids who meet. The first kid is different from the second kid. The second kid is different from the first kid. They are completely different existences. It is a meeting between two different existences. One of the things which arises from that is conflict. Many people die from wars. Where sadness and misery meet foolishness and madness, wars begin. From an Economical standpoint, it is a massive waste of resources, from a Historical standpoint, it is a great loss. But, this misery is one part of meeting people. It is one form of making acquaintances.'"

The Chief Maid: "She said that..."

Elder Sister Maid: "It felt very sad."

The Chief Maid: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "At that time, I didn't understand at all. People should just stop fighting, since we're all people. It's because of noblemen giving orders that wars begin, so without noblemen, there will be no wars. I thought it was that simple. But being so naïve, I also thought that all Demons should be exterminated from the face of existence.

"Demons are things which even the Spirit... abhors and detests. How can such a miserable thing be an act of making acquaintances? In my pride, that was how I thought. I could not understand what the Mistress meant by 'the meeting of two existences.'"

The Chief Maid: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Even up to now, when I stand corrected, I still do not fully understand. Why do people have this emotion, why is war the result? But I must try my best to understand... for myself."

The Chief Maid: "You've become stronger."

Elder Sister Maid: "That's not true."

The Chief Maid: "Both you and your sister..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Sorry?"

The Chief Maid: "Such arrogant disciples."

Elder Sister Maid: "Ah..."

The Chief Maid: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Wind blows.

The Chief Maid: "Get in, you're going to catch a cold."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes."

The Chief Maid: "Listen."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes."

The Chief Maid: "The world is massive and without limits. There are people with all sorts of souls, impure and cruel, corrupt and cowardly, but also those which are peaceful and beautiful, who seek to make the world a better place. The world holds all sorts of people, it's that massive. — But, you're already making great progress. So I'm sure that one day, you will understand. If you don't give up, definitely."

— — — ***The Demon King Hotsprings Villa, the Entrance***

East Fortress Base Commander: "Right then. We're all packed."

Aide-de-Camp: "Did you forget anything important?"

Little Sister Maid: "I bought lots of souvenirs ~♪"

The Chief Maid: "Are you ready, Demon King?"

The Demon King: "Yep, I'm all prepared."

The Female Paladin: "This teleportation thing really cuts down on travel time, how convenient."

The Hero: "Well, it's a secret technique."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Well, I don't think many people can say they've had the privilege of going to a hotspring holiday with the Demon King herself."

Aide-de-Camp: "Indeed! What a privilege."

The Female Paladin: "Oh, where's the Mage?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Oh, she was walking around just now."

Footsteps.

The Mage: "...Arrived."

The Chief Maid: "Well then, shall we go home?"

The Demon King: "The Hero will send the East Fortress Base Commander back first. We'll wait here."

The Mage: "It's fine. I'll do it."

The Hero: "Oh? You know the City of the Gate well?"

The Mage nods.

East Fortress Base Commander: "Alright then, I'll go with the Mage."

Aide-de-Camp: "Thank you very much."

The Mage: "...It's nothing."

Teleportation flash.

The Chief Maid: "Let's go too, then."

Little Sister Maid: "Back to the Village of Wintering♪"

The Demon King: "Hero."

The Hero: "Yeah!"

The Female Paladin: "I'll be sure to come back here the next time I need a hotspring vacation."

The Demon King: "We'll have a mountain-load of work to do once we get back."

The Hero: "Yeah."

The Chief Maid: "We should get back as soon as we can."

The Demon King: "Hmm."

The Female Paladin: "?"

The Demon King: "The moon is very bright, it's about time for the Kurultai."

The Hero: "The reports must be piling up, and I'm sure there's a whole lot of trade issues by now. I'm also worried about the Lone Winter King and the Central Continent."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah. Let's go!"

The Hero: "Leave it to me."

Teleportation flash.

Volume 2 Chapter 9, “The Great Demon Conference, the Kurultai”

----- The Winter Palace, the Study

Butler: “That’s not it. Steep the tea more. Two sugar cubes.”

Royal Maidservant: “Y-yes!”

Clerk: “Where should I put the information on agricultural tax?”

Butler: “Put everything from last year in the Merchant’s Disciple’s study. The rest goes to the archives room.”

Royal Maidservant: “There are applications for the Queen of Winter.”

Butler: “Pass them to the King for vetting.”

Lone Winter King: “You look busy.”

Butler: “No shit, Young Man.”

Lone Winter King: “It looks really terrible.”

Butler: “No, no, it’s fine. I’m finally of use.”

Lone Winter King: “I’m a bit worried.”

Butler: “Don’t worry, young man. This is the time to redeem my flagrant young days when I was a carefree dandy.”

Lone Winter King: “I’m worrying a lot.”

Butler: “Besides, apart from me, who else is there to handle all of this?”

Lone Winter King: “That’s true.”

Secret Service Captain: “Sir, the elite squad has been assembled.”

Butler: “Great, prepare Equipment No.2 and stand by for further instructions.”

Secret Service Captain: "Yes, sir."

Lone Winter King: "Once they're in the Demon World, it's going to be difficult to establish contact."

Butler: "That won't be a problem. They'll learn to cope with it. Maintaining one's cover is the most important part of going undercover. I used to do this a lot in my younger days, but it still makes my heart flutter."

Lone Winter King: "Well, at least now you won't go around groping young girls."

Butler: "...?!"

Lone Winter King: "I'm serious."

Butler: "Sigh... That makes me sad..."

Lone Winter King: "Your responsibility is to conduct investigation and look for ways to achieve peace."

Butler: "Understood."

Lone Winter King: "As much as possible, I would like to avoid conflict with the Demons right now. With the massive influx of immigrants and the soaring growth rates, I have enough on my hands with the Central Continent alone."

Butler: "Yes."

Lone Winter King: "Considering the reactions of the people, it is likely that nothing I say will be enough, but on my part, I'm still keeping in view some kind of ceasefire agreement or secret agreement. No, achieving that would really save us."

Butler: "Indeed... The Demon World—or rather, the Underground World is experiencing its own movements. The City of the Gate has been taken back by the Demons, but despite the rumours from the Central Continent, those Human merchants who were allegedly massacred and exterminated are actually thriving in the City."

Lone Winter King: "Hmm..."

Butler: "I'm not sure how many of them are still alive, but from what I've heard, it's an impressive number. Many are even crossing into the Demon World, but then again, there are many Demons who look exactly like humans. It's very difficult to tell them apart at a glance."

Lone Winter King: "Try to get all this information into a report for me."

Butler: "As you order."

Lone Winter King: "This isn't really an order."

Butler: "It's much cooler to give orders, especially at your age."

Lone Winter King: "I don't want to hear your jokes right now."

Butler: "Nyohohohohoho."

Lone Winter King: "On a side note..."

Butler: "Yes."

Lone Winter King: "I've been thinking recently... What kind of Demon... What kind of man is the Demon King...?"

Butler: "Hmm."

Lone Winter King: "He may be the enemy, but to wage a war while administrating an entire World, he must be some kind of peerless Hero, and I accord him the respect that goes with it."

Butler: "Indeed."

----- The Palace of Ice, in an Elegant Small Room

Disciple Nobleman: "—So, that's how it is."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Great work."

Disciple Nobleman: "No, no, I've just been enjoying myself at your expense."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "In summary, what is the most pressing situation."

Disciple Nobleman: "There are three countries who wish to join the Tripartite Economic Union: The Kingdom of the Lake, the Kingdom of Branches, and the Kingdom of Reeds."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Hmm..."

Disciple Nobleman: "That being said, the only one who is willing to openly voice their desire to join is the Kingdom of the Lake. The others would like to join, but they're afraid of the power of the Church."

Marshal: "As expected, this is an issue of power."

Disciple Nobleman: "That's right. The Kingdom of Red Horses will never let those other Kingdoms do that."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Quite right."

Disciple Nobleman: "To put it another way, the Kingdom of Red Horses... and of course the Kingdom of White Night, if those two countries did not surround the kingdoms friendly to us, we may have even more countries expressing willingness to join us."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "What's the status with the serfs?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Before that, let me tell you about the other landlords."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Continue."

Disciple Nobleman: "Well, the landlords... where was I?"

Scratches head.

Disciple Nobleman: "Ah... They want to do business with us! There are about twenty-one of them. Most of these are the ruling nobility of City-States."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "As expected, many people are interested in trade."

Disciple Nobleman: "Yes. It's because of the high inflation, particularly with wheat. It definitely hurts that they can't sell their produce, but most of all, it hurts that they can't even move any of their produce."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "What do you mean?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Whether the price of goods goes up or down has a direct and significant impact on the City-States, especially if trade is a major industry. If they can buy a good for two gold pieces, maybe they can sell it for three, if they can buy it for three, maybe they can sell it for four. In this way, they make a one-gold-piece profit per good."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Hmm."

Disciple Nobleman: "Now that prices have gone up, in theory, they should be able to sell for higher prices and hence gain more profit, but because it's too expensive, they can't even move any of their goods. If the goods can't move, then they can earn neither tariffs nor city tax. It's gotten to such an extent that the volume of water traffic on the River Songboat has gone down to just 10% compared to last year."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "So it's that bad, huh."

Disciple Nobleman: "From their perspective, right now, the only place to which it is possible to move their goods is to the South. If they can begin trade with the South, goods can start flowing and they can start making money from the tariffs. Even though they have nothing to do with the production of the goods, as long as the goods aren't flowing through their cities, they're losing money constantly."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "That may be so, but it can't really be helped."

Disciple Nobleman: "Yeah, well... For example, if they were exporting weapons, then the Church may have a serious problem with that. But as long as they aren't exporting weapons or anything, and if they just say that they're using us as a transit point for the goods, the Church might just let them do what they want."

It's clear that being under our umbrella, forming a union with us, is a very strong desire of theirs."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "..."

Disciple Nobleman: "However, on the one hand, the City noblemen will not oppose the Emancipation of the Serfs. For the most part, the craftsmen and guildsmen who work in the cities are not serfs, and are unconnected to it for the most part."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Indeed."

Disciple Nobleman: "The kingdoms which are going around saying that the Emancipation of the Serfs is anathema to the teachings of the Church of Light are those agricultural communities or other large kingdoms where the Church has significant sway over. The Kingdom of the Lake is a very large country, but since the Holy Order of the Lake is firmly and officially established there, the news of the Emancipation of the Serfs travelled there quickly and was firmly accepted. From her refusal to provide troops to the expedition against us, it is clear that the Queen of the Lake is firmly aligning towards us."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Hmm."

Disciple Nobleman: "Well, that's how I feel."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "This is all very chaotic."

Disciple Nobleman: "Compared to the chaos we are facing here, it's much worse over there."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Is that so?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Everybody is panicking about what I've just explained to you, it's really chaotic."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Hmm."

Disciple Nobleman: "On the whole, the nobility everywhere is very afraid."

Queen of Ice and Snow: “Afraid?”

Disciple Nobleman: “That’s right. The lifestyles of noblemen are sustained by the taxes which are paid to them, but from a more existential point of view, the reason why they are even noblemen is due to the inherent class system. In other words, it’s because they receive the guarantee from the King which tells them ‘You have power!’ The serfs, ministers and servants then pledge, ‘I will follow you!’ In this system, even the lower classes are spiritually satisfied with their lot in life and accept it.”

Queen of Ice and Snow: “...”

Disciple Nobleman: “So what happens when you remove the lowest-class status of the Serfs? In other words, when the bottom of the class system completely disappears? The entire structure of society and their individual fiefdoms will collapse instantly. These lords believe it will be impossible to avoid the degree of unrest which will follow that.

“As I’m sure you can see, in the Tripartite Union where the Emancipation of the Serfs has been successfully enacted, the farmers and settlers still pay their taxes as usual. Of course, the structure of society has changed to their advantage but it doesn’t mean that the Emancipation of the Serfs is equal to the mass execution of all nobility. These nobles aren’t confident that it can be so effectively carried out. It’s very tragic.”

Queen of Ice and Snow: “That being said...”

Disciple Nobleman: “Yes?”

Queen of Ice and Snow: “You come from a noble family, you look like you are fairly rich.”

Disciple Nobleman: “Yes, of course.”

Queen of Ice and Snow: “?”

Disciple Nobleman: "I believe in civilisation. Even though I am a nobleman, I believe in civilisation and culture."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Culture..."

Disciple Nobleman: "Singing or dancing or other forms of art are not just some trivial, superficial thing. Do dogs wear dresses? Do cats paint? Do cats compose poetry? Do pigs put up operas? The only existences who do that are people with souls, like us. This is what it means to be human. It may look like it is pointless, but it's actually very important. Because we are who we are, because we do things today so that our legacy can last until tomorrow. We need things like culture and civilisation. What's the point of being a nobleman if I don't believe in this?"

"If one does not want to continue being a nobleman, then it is perfectly acceptable to become a merchant or a soldier or whatever. It should not be the case that just because you are born into a noble family, you have no way of moving out of it, or vice versa. My grandmother used to say, "A nobleman is one who strives for elegance in everything he does," and I believe all should be given the opportunity."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "...Hahaha."

Disciple Nobleman: "What does your Majesty feel?"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Yes, really. How funny."

Disciple Nobleman: "What would you have me do?"

Queen of Ice and Snow: "Go to the Kingdom of Red Horses."

Disciple Nobleman: "As you wish."

Queen of Ice and Snow: "And of course, make sure you strive for elegance as you do it."

----- The Kingdom of Metal, the Royal Palace, the Ministry of Defence

Disciple Soldier: "Aaaarghhhhh?!"

Metal Lieutenant: "What is the matter, Minister for Defence?"

Disciple Soldier: "I'm at my limit!!!"

Metal Lieutenant: "Please calm down, sir."

Disciple Soldier: "I'm a soldier!"

Metal Lieutenant: "I am also a soldier, sir."

Disciple Soldier: "Calm down. Calm down."

Metal Lieutenant: "Breathe slowly, sir."

Disciple Soldier inhales and exhales deeply.

Metal Lieutenant: "Do you feel better?"

Disciple Soldier: "Arghhh, look at all those reports."

Metal Lieutenant: "You are too agitated, Minister!"

Disciple Soldier: "This whole Minister for Defence thing was a terrible idea. I'm just a soldier, I shouldn't be anything more than the Commander for the Rear Garrison of the Realm."

Metal Lieutenant: "It is completely natural that a soldier who performs well on the field should be promoted."

Disciple Soldier: "But why have I become a Minister!"

Metal Lieutenant: "Well, that's because the Kingdom of Metal is comprised of military noblemen. The entire system is built around these soldiers. Anyone above the rank of Seneschal is usually also a military person. You could say that the motto of the Kingdom of Metal is, 'A soldier is only a soldier in times of war. In peace, he must administer the country.'"

Disciple Soldier: "Ahhh, I've been swindled."

Metal Lieutenant: "Well, let's face the facts, sir."

Disciple Soldier: "Reportsarescary. Reportsarescary."

Metal Lieutenant: "They aren't that scary, sir."

Disciple Soldier: "If I get the reports wrong, it'll be my head on the line! The Paladin will stab me with her sword. The Scholar will give up on the entire Kingdom. I won't even have a chair to sit on. I'll have to go the toilet and cry."

Metal Lieutenant: "What kind of past did this guy have..."

Disciple Soldier: "That's not what I meant."

Metal Lieutenant: "Well, please calm down, sir. Have some tea. If the reports are so scary, I'll read them out for you to listen. As long as we do this together, we'll surely get over that mountain."

Disciple Soldier: "Thank you. I was about to crumble..."

Metal Lieutenant: "Well, it's true that the number of reports we have here could kill someone."

Disciple Soldier: "Ugh."

Metal Lieutenant: "But actually, if we deal with this, just this one report, half of the reports will be solved as well."

Disciple Soldier: "...What kind of issue is that?"

Metal Lieutenant: "Actually, it's an order from the King. It reads: 'The population is increasing, what the hell should we do?'"

Disciple Soldier: "Huh? Isn't it good that the population is increasing?"

Metal Lieutenant: "Well, it's a good thing. As the population increases, our workforce increases and we can produce more food. We can also field more soldiers in times of war."

Disciple Soldier: "I-I see."

Metal Lieutenant: "But currently, there are a lot of short-term problems with this. To begin with, the reason why there are so many immigrants in this country is because the Tripartite Union is rich in food supplies and also guarantees the Emancipation of the Serfs. Among the countries of the Tripartite Union, the Kingdom of Metal and the Kingdom of Winter are the ones which are closest to the borders of the Central Continent."

Disciple Soldier: "Indeed."

Metal Lieutenant: "However, the majority of immigrants here are refugee serfs, impoverished settlers or other people who often have no assets apart from the clothes on their backs. Even if they did have some assets, it would be difficult for them to find jobs and hence they only become a social problem."

Disciple Soldier: "That's true."

Metal Lieutenant: "Up till now, we have been requesting the assistance of the Kingdoms of Ice and Winter with dealing with the immense overflow, and also distributing them to villages throughout the area, but this is reaching a limit."

Disciple Soldier: "So what should we do?"

Metal Lieutenant: "That is up to the Minister for Defence."

Disciple Soldier: "Hoho! ...Isn't that me!"

Metal Lieutenant: "The Minister for Defence has the responsibility to defend the people."

Disciple Soldier: "Ughh."

Metal Lieutenant: "Well, apart from that problem, with the influx of bankrupt settlers, we've also gotten an issue about the appearance of bandits and rouges. Because the settlers come from different countries, their culture and lifestyles may be completely incompatible with the locals, and hence there are many cases of trouble brewing from these misunderstandings."

Those comprise a large proportion of this mountain of reports. Of course, as the Ministry for Defence, we should focus on dealing with the larger picture.

“On the whole, the way we deal with banditry and armed violence is to arrest and detain as many as we can, even force compensation—from those who can afford compensation. However, these are only punitive measures we can conduct after the incident has taken place, right? As a result, we aren’t actually preventing the problem from taking place at all.”

Disciple Soldier: “That’s definitely true.”

Metal Lieutenant: “...”

Disciple Soldier: “...”

Metal Lieutenant: “What shall we do?”

Disciple Soldier: “Hmm... The Scholar made us learn many case studies... especially about settlers.”

Metal Lieutenant: “...”

Disciple Soldier: (This is definitely troublesome. It’s gotten so bad we’ve even got violence breaking out willy-nilly. Above all, if the settlements become a lawless place, it would become a safe haven for criminals and louts and other scary people...”

Metal Lieutenant: “...”

Disciple Soldier: “What about the guilds?”

Metal Lieutenant: “The guilds?”

Disciple Soldier: “Do the metal guilds not accept apprentices?”

Metal Lieutenant: “Well, I’ll ask around. I could probably go the Hall of Guilds... But even so, one guildsman could probably only train five or maybe ten apprentices at a go anywhere in the world.....\”

Disciple Soldier: "In that case, contact the workshops and hire some craftsmen to advise on this... I want to expand the workshop networks."

Metal Lieutenant: "The workshops?"

Disciple Soldier: "No, no, that's not it... Well, for the time being."

Metal Lieutenant: "For the time being?"

Disciple Soldier: "My wish is for them all to become soldiers."

Metal Lieutenant: "Huh?! Soldiers?"

Disciple Soldier: "I mean, they don't have a job, right? And the guilds have reached their limits for apprentices. Even the village settlements are at their limit for settlers. They're broke. They have no place to live. They have no place to work, they have nothing, they're completely broke."

Metal Lieutenant: "Yes, that's correct."

Disciple Soldier: "I'm a soldier, so I think the military is the best."

Metal Lieutenant: "But if that's the case, we'll have to pay them a lot of money, right? Not just their salaries, but we've also got to fork out money to equip them, to feed them and to house them."

Disciple Soldier: "Well, they can provide for their own upkeep."

Metal Lieutenant: "What?!"

Disciple Soldier: "Like you said, 'a soldier must administer the country in times of peace,' right? In that case, we'll come up with a new class of soldiers, beneath the professional soldiers. In times of peace, they will till the lands, so they'll be half-farmer, half-soldier battalions. We'll set their military service at five years for now. If they work for those five years, we'll give them the appropriate monetary compensation and arable land for their services."



to spread civilisation to Hokkaido.

Half-Farmer, Half-Soldier: This refers to the *tuntian* system. Soldiers are given parcels of arable land to cultivate in times of peace, and they are allowed to reap whatever they produce from the land for themselves, but in times of war, they can be called upon to fight. It first began in China in the 3rd century BC, but was popularised by Cao Cao during the Three Kingdoms Period (of Dynasty Warriors fame). In Japan, during the Meiji Restoration Period, the *tonden* system was used

Metal Lieutenant: "So basically, you're trying to use the soldiers as farmers."

Disciple Soldier: "Farming also helps to keep the body fit. Many farmers are thin, but that's probably to do with malnutrition. If we can establish potatoes as the centre of the agricultural economy, we can at least ensure everybody has enough to eat."

Metal Lieutenant: "That is a national priority."

Disciple Soldier: "We can allow them to live together with their wives and kids, and even expand the age limits of the scheme. We can send them to the wastelands and forests neighbouring the Kingdom of Ice and get them to build new settlements. This could also form part of our defensive perimeter in times of war. It's a good defensive place, with hills and rivers, right? The weather conditions are a bit harsh, so we might have to get them to establish villages which rely on forestry, shepardry, or potato farming rather than wheat farming."

Metal Lieutenant: "And what sort of support will we give them? What will we do about food and the like?"

Disciple Soldier: "They are soldiers, so naturally the Kingdom will support them with money and supplies. We could even get this to come directly from the throne, as a gift from the King. It's just that it takes about three years for potato plantations to be effectively established."

Metal Lieutenant: "Yeah, that's a long time."

Disciple Soldier: "Let's make sure we plan this out thoroughly before we do anything. There are a lot of soldiers who used to be settlers or the sons of settlers in the military, right?"

Metal Lieutenant: "Yes. I myself am one of them."

Disciple Soldier: "Assemble just seven of them, get them to sound out what they feel are the issues and disadvantages of this scheme. Also, contact the Holy Order and request for their assistance and expertise. I've thought about this many times before, but we should really establish a Medical Corp. We have to revise the way we're training our Medics and Medical Officers, instead of relying on civilian doctors. If we do this, when diseases break out at new settlements, they can be tended to and treated without having to go all the way back to a large city. Patients could also go to settlements from nearby settlements, it could be a very effective system."

Metal Lieutenant: "That's good. It's best to reduce the number of civilians we bring to the battlefield."

Disciple Soldier: "Also, we have to do something about the road networks."

Metal Lieutenant: "Road networks?"

Disciple Soldier: "The presence of roads can dramatically increase the travelling speed of soldiers many times over, especially in Kingdoms like ours, where troops are mainly infantry."

Better infrastructure also facilitates the transportation of goods and people. Right now, I believe we should build new roads between unlinked areas and expand and repave the old roads.”

Metal Lieutenant: “Where will we get the money?”

Disciple Soldier: “About that, I’m sure we can get the Kingdom of Ice and the Kingdom of Winter to help with that.”

Metal Lieutenant: “Huh...?”

Disciple Soldier: “This is not just about the Kingdom of Metal, we should start by building highways between the Three Kingdoms. If we do this, trade will become far more convenient and the movement of our workers will also be easier. The wallets of the Kingdom of Metal will certainly be pleased by this, won’t they?”

Metal Lieutenant: “Well, that’s not untrue.”

Disciple Soldier: “At the same time, we should also create more metal factories.”

Metal Lieutenant: “Metal factories...?”

Disciple Soldier: “Large scale metal workshops. If we want to train craftsmen, we should work them while training them, right? We can get them to beef up the infrastructure of the national economy and to manufacture weaponry and equipment.”

Metal Lieutenant: “I’m sure you know this...”

Disciple Soldier: “What?” *Interested.*

Metal Lieutenant: “But with something as large-scale as this, there’s going to be a lot of work.”

Disciple Soldier: “I’ve been swindled?!”

----- The Village of Wintering, the End of Winter, the Diary of the Little Maid Sister

It's the end of our third winter.

We've used a lot of spices this winter. Spices like *nutmeg*, pepper and *saffron*. All of these were brought back by the Hero from the Demon World, and they're really useful. Hooray for the Hero!!!

The Mistress seems to be very busy with many things. Today, she left with the Hero to the Capital of Winter. They were talking about things like trade, commerce, and applications. She had to prepare a lot of souvenirs for these people. The Mistress may be the King of the Demon World, but if souvenirs are so important, she might go broke from these souvenirs.

Today, I made a sausage-filled pie. I added a lot of pepper so that it's got its great peppery taste. The Hero seems to love it. I even made some blood sausages. I sent some to the Village Chief and he seemed to really love it.

It's almost spring.



Nutmeg: A sweet spice which is used to mask the smell of fish and meat. It is grown natively in Indonesia.

Saffron: In our world, this spice is native to the Mediterranean Sea. It can be used to make dishes like Yellow Saffron Rice.

----- The Demon World, the Banks of Phoenix Lake, Pavilion Street

Wind blows.

The Hero: "Ahh, it's amazing!"

The Chief Maid: "It's almost unbelievable how much progress there has been."

The Hero: "That being said... It's like a city."

The Demon King: "Yeah, there are so many people congregating there, it's almost like a small city."

The Chief Maid: "Powerful people from the various Tribes, even people from the smaller Tribes have gathered here for the Kurultai. But apart from them, merchants and artists have also gathered here, even mercenaries willing to offer their services. It's normal that while there are many people attending the Kurultai, there are even more people there just to offer their services."

The Hero: "...It's about time."

The Demon King: "Yes, it is."

The Hero: "What are the odds like?"

The Demon King: "Definitely nothing good, but we've got time."

The Hero: "You've been saying that."

The Demon King: "Unanimity is the principle. If I disagreed, at the very worst, the meeting would just be called off. We can just delay the end of it."

The Hero: "Mmhmm."

The Demon King: "That being said, it's not like we have unlimited time. No matter how long it takes, two months is the limit. At the Kurultai, precedent cases are strongly respected, sometimes even more than the word of the Demon King."

The Hero: "Is that so?"

The Demon King: "Yeah, that's why we have two months. In that time, we have to search, compromise, threaten, or look for a way out by any means possible."

The Chief Maid: "Today is just the Opening Address and Salutations."

The Hero: "And the Demon King will be making the Opening Address?"

The Demon King: "That's right."

The Hero: "What should I do?"

The Demon King: "What should he do, Chief Maid?"

The Chief Maid: "Hmm, I think we can entrust the role of chief of your Security Detail to him... While you're making introductions, he'll stand to your back and right to fend off any security threats against you, and also look authoritative."

The Hero: "That sounds quite cool."

The Demon King: "You'll be there as the strongest Knight and General of the Demon King's personal retinue. You've got a certain presence that will make everybody feel assured when they see you with me, right?"

The Chief Maid: "Yeah, I suppose it's a form of power-play and intimidation. From time to time, if you shout 'Gaaaah!!!' the people in attendance will probably think, 'This guy is really something.'"

The Hero: "That could make things really uneasy."

The Demon King: "It would be bad if things weren't uneasy to begin with."

The Chief Maid: "That's right. It'll drain them."

The Hero: "Well, I suppose that's true."

The Demon King: "Our pavilions are this one and the eight tentages surrounding it."

The Chief Maid: "We don't really need them, though."

The Hero: "It's just us after all."

The Demon King: "But there're going to be people sending tributes later, so we've got to get ready to receive audiences. To begin with, the Demon King's pavilion has to be the biggest one as a show of might."

The Hero: "That's true."

All hail the Kurultai!

The Demon King: "Right, it's about time then?"

The Chief Maid: "Please wait."

The Demon King: "Eh?"

The Chief Maid: "Don't tell me you're going out in that silk shirt with that rolled up skirt and white shirt, it's so dull. Do you really intend to give the Opening Address looking like that?"

The Demon King: "Should I really not? Like I thought..."

The Chief Maid: "Why are you speaking in such a small voice?"

The Hero: "Ahahaha. She's embarrassed."

The Chief Maid: "Hero."

The Hero: "Yes?"

The Chief Maid: "Please face this way for a moment."

The Demon King: "No! The Hero should go outside!"

The Chief Maid: "If he's not here, then Your Majesty will just oppose me!"

The Hero: "Well, yeah, it's as she says."

The Demon King: "N-no, no! Fine I get it! I'll strip. I'll strip by myself! I'll do it."

The Chief Maid: "Well, you've got some really dull underwear."

The Demon King: "It keeps me warm, so isn't it fine?"

The Chief Maid: "It's so passé. And you've got to consider matching the colours. Here, this is black. Try it on."

The Demon King: "Ahh, where are you touching me."

The Chief Maid: "You really need to get rid of the flab here, alright, I'll pinch it together."

The Hero: (Black? What's black?!)

----- The Kurultai Venue, the Central Stadium

The Demon King: "My comrades! My people!"

Ohhhhhh! It's the Demon King! The Demon King has come!

The Demon King: "I'd first like to thank the care and concern that many of my comrades has shown me in my time as the Demon King. The prosperity of the Demon World will last forever!"

Yeahhhhh!

The Demon King: "My rule has lasted just twenty years. It has been a while since the Humans broke through the gate. We've managed to control the region with magic and might, and separate the world we live in from the Human world. We've even managed to put another gate in place to separate our two worlds.

"However, the gate has fulfilled its purpose. The Black Knight, my right hand and my sword destroyed the gate himself!"

The Chief Maid: "Alright. Hero. Take a step forward. Don't overdo it."

The Hero: "Yeah."

The Hero buzzes with magic energy.

Ah, it's the Black Knight! So that's the Black Knight... The strongest Knight in the personal retinue of the Demon King.

He's shining with light? Wait, I can almost hear something. Is he saying something?

The Hero: "GAHHHHHH!!!"

Wow! What a killing intent! To think he was that scary...

The Demon King: "My comrades! This is my right hand! The gate has been destroyed. And from now on, the world beyond and our world will be linked as one big world! The world that lies before us is not the same as the world we came from. It is a completely new world altogether!"

Yeahhhh! Demon King! Demon King! Glory to the Demon King!

The Demon King: "My people! Today, we stand at a crossroad. There are many questions about the big new world that we have in front of us. Many Tribes are gathered here today. We will extend to them the proper ceremonies. But today, we are not here for ceremonies, we are here to search for the road that leads to tomorrow!"

Yeahhhh! Yeahhhh!

The Demon King: "I, the 34th Demon King, Ruby Eyes, declare this Kurultai open!"

Yeahhhh!

Demon King! Demon King! Demon King!

Demon King! Long live the Demon King! Long live the Kurultai!

Glory to the Demon King!

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Demon King: "I think that's enough for now."

The Chief Maid: "What a lot of people."

----- The Kurultai, the Demon King's Pavilion, that Night

The Hero: "Ahhhhh."

The Demon King: "Ahhh, that was tiring."

The Chief Maid: "Well, well."

The Hero: "Why are you still so spirited?"

The Demon King: "You're some kind of monster!"

The Chief Maid: "I wasn't the one who had to do all the talking."

The Hero: "How many people have we seen?"

The Demon King: "Hmm...? I only remember that they came in fifteen or so groups?"

The Chief Maid: "Forty-eight tribes have come."

The Hero: "Forty-eight?! I would have thought forty was too much!"

The Demon King: "I felt like I had to meet thousands of people."

The Chief Maid: "Well, when one tribe comes to visit you, the Khan brings all kinds of people with him, representing all the important factions and branch tribes, all the princes and princesses, lords and ladies, so you do have to meet quite a few people."

The Hero: "And when they all start to talk at once, wow. It's incredibly rowdy... Quite amazing, really."

The Demon King: "Tea please, Chief Maid. Make it sweet."

The Hero: "Me too. Make it super sweet."

The Chief Maid: "Yes, yes, please wait."

The Hero: "Right, Demon King."

The Demon King: "Yes?"

The Hero: "Have the Eight Great Tribes come yet?"

The Demon King: "They've come. They were the very first."

The Hero: "I didn't really know."

The Demon King: "If you weren't familiar with it, you might have missed them. All the tribes came with very impressive audiences."

The Hero: "I apologise, but would you kindly explain to me the various races? Especially the ones who came earlier."

The Demon King: "Hmm, I don't mind... Chief Maid, another cup please."

The Chief Maid: "As you wish."

The Demon King: "The first who came was the Tribe of the Fiends. The Fiends have always been a very populous Tribe. They look a lot like Humans. Of course, the shape of their pupils and some other characteristics help to give them some very defining characteristics but it wouldn't be farfetched for them to successfully infiltrate Human society if they so wanted to."

"Apart from large numbers, the Fiends also conduct trade and mix freely with the other Tribes. The pure-blooded Fiends are the Tribe of Tattoos and the Tribe of Shut Eyes. It is not uncommon for other Demons, especially from the Tribes of the Fang and the Banshees, to join the Tribe of the Fiends."

The Hero: "Yes, I know. It's that very intimidating, regal, old man."

The Demon King: "Yes. Though I hear he's very good with the axe."

The Hero: "Is that so?"

The Demon King: "Their Tribe neither supports nor opposes the invasion of the Human World. They themselves admitted that even without conquering the rest of the world, administering their large population and many different branches is already an incredibly difficult task on its own. Not just on invading the Human

World, the Fiends have opted for the middle ground on many issues. Well, to the other races, this seems to be a very half-baked thing to do. But that doesn't mean that the Tribe of the Fiends are a soft people. Individually, the Fiends are a bunch of curious people, and they like to adapt at the very last minute. It's important to be flexible, but one could say that they go in whichever direction the wind blows."

The Chief Maid: "Among the Demons which live in the cities, there are a lot of Fiends."

The Hero: "Ahh! So the Demons who look like Humans in the City of the Gate except with cat-eyes or longer arms are Fiends, right?"

The Demon King: "That's right. What do you think? Do they not look almost like Humans? As a Tribe, they have their good and bad, and we may yet be able to make use of them. But because they are many in number, their domestic situation is incredibly complex."

The Hero: "Hmm... Well, it seems that they are neither friend nor foe at this conference."

The Demon King: "That is correct."

The Hero: "Hmm."

The Demon King: "Those who came next were from the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale. Their skin is blue, and they are very decorated... you understand?"

The Hero: "Yeah, I understand. They're a very intense bunch of people, right? I know the Demons of the Pale, alright. At least, I know about their skill with the sword. You could say that they are the elite among the Demons. Actually, I've never met a weak Demon of the Pale."

The Demon King: "That's true. The Pale are very strong indeed. Going by numbers they do not have even half of what the Fiends have. But they have outstanding magical capabilities, and each is physically very strong. You could say they are the best of the best among the Demons."

They are also split into many different branch tribes, but all of them are united by their blue skin. The colour of their eyes varies from bright gold to deep red though."

The Hero: "Hmm."

The Demon King: "They are a very centralised Tribe with a very strong class system in place. The Khan of the Demons of the Pale holds power on a completely different dimension than the other Khans. They are a very militaristic state, with a very military culture. They're a race which values purity, so you won't find Demons from other races joining their tribe. Marriages between close family members are even encouraged."

The Hero: "There sure are a lot of different kinds of Demons."

The Demon King: "It was like this in the past as well, but Demons take the names of their tribes. That's why, to put it extremely, the Tribe gives them an identity, and if one attaches himself to the Tribe, he becomes one of their people and one of their comrades. That is why you get Tribes like the Fiends, who are comprised essentially of whoever is willing to join them. However, the Pale are different. They believe in the purity of blood, and hence apart from those born to the Race, there are none who may join it."

The Hero: "And what are their views on co-existence?"

The Demon King: "They were the vanguard of the assault on the Human World. Of course, they are motivated by land and economic gain, but much of it is just a desire to prove that they are the strongest and most elite race. It's good that they're so confident of their abilities, but it makes them very strong instigators for conflict."

The Chief Maid: "Actually, they have immense military might, so it wouldn't be easy for us to beat them either. Most of the Demon Kings have been selected from their Tribe, among the Eight Great Demon Tribe, so they are resentful of that as well..."

The Demon King: "Another faction which will strongly support war with the Humans is the Tribe of the Fang. The Tribe of the Fang is comprised of many, many different races. As long as they possess the body of a beast, they may be part of the Tribe. The current Khan is the Silver Tiger Lord. They don't really live in the cities. Instead, they tend to make settlements in the mountainsides where they live. Many also live in the forests and other places with a lot of nature. They aren't the most civilised of races, but they are very warlike."

The Hero: "Ahh. Hmm... So I suppose the Demon Wolf Marshal was from that tribe..."

The Demon King: "He was a great general from a previous generation... It is quite unfortunate."

The Chief Maid: "Well, he was also for invading the Humans, so it's for the best..."

The Demon King: "The Tribe of the Fang are on the Invasion Faction. They were always a Tribe with a fair amount of bloodlust. In the world below, due to developments in agriculture, previously forested areas are now increasingly being lumbered and settled. They need more living space and they look to expand to the world above. Without a doubt, land is their main intention."

The Hero: "How do they lean?"

The Demon King: "The Fang's ideologies are shaped around the acquisition of new lands for their people. To begin with, most of their members are carnivorous and a single one of them requires a fair deal of space to survive comfortably. Humans and other agricultural Demons only look for enough land for them to farm and grow crops on, but each Fang desires a 'Hunting Area' that can be several square kilometres per person. On top of that, they have no qualms with appropriating the land of those with a culture different to theirs, in other words, agricultural cultures. Whatever they take over, they no longer consider farmland, but rather part of their 'Hunting Area.' That will definitely pose a severe threat to relations with Demons of other Tribes, let alone Humans."

The Hero: "I see."

The Demon King: "Well, that being said, there seems to be a moderate faction taking root in their Tribe, but... Right now, it is the extremist faction which we will be discussing with."

The Chief Maid: "That's true."

The Demon King: "Next are the Automatons. Even among Demons, they are a pretty odd bunch. They are constantly clad in armour, making them resemble a group of machines."

The Hero: "Oh yeah, we saw them just now."

The Demon King: "They take special pride in nurturing their mechanical skills and their magical engineering abilities. They are rather famous for producing inventors as well. Because their mechanisms are fused to the bodies of the Automatons, you don't see them very much throughout the Demon World."

The Demon King: "They are also part of the Invasion Faction. However, the Automatons are far more cool-headed than the previous two races, so it's clear that they're doing this for the profit. What they want is access to more metal resources and rare earth minerals. In order to carry out their research, they need more new metal samples, and for that to happen they need to establish mines throughout the surface world. Moreover, the mines which they own are beginning to deplete. That is one reason why they support this war so vehemently."

The Hero: "Finally, an enemy we can explain easily."

The Chief Maid: "Indeed."

The Demon King: "Well, it's not that convenient to conclude. To begin with, while they're part of the Eight Great Demon Tribes, their numbers are exceedingly few. As a result, they are an enigma. I don't know what their real situation is like. I don't really know what their motives or purposes are either. In fact, I have no idea how they were born or what they really look like. I can't even say definitively if that massive suit of armour is their real body or if it's just a mechanism."

The Hero: "It's a mechanism, I think? Inside the armour, there's a cream or pink coloured goopy substance that resembles the flesh of a fruit. Inside all of that, there's a girl. The Automaton moves due to magical energy emanating from inside the suit in tandem with pressure cylinders."

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "Eh? What's up?"

----- Ten Minutes Later, the Kurultai, the Demon King's Pavilion

The Hero: "Wike I said, nothwing hwappened..."

The Demon King: "You have both me and the Female Paladin, so why do you live such a flagrant life of skirt-chasing!!!"

The Hero: "No, umm, thwat's not skirt-chwasing, it'th pwart of the dwuties of a Hhero..."

The Demon King: "A pointless answer."

The Chief Maid: "Yeah..."

The Demon King: "If you intended to bring her back and introduce her to us, then fine. But without that intention, you went ahead and looked at a maiden's naked body, what's up with that!"

The Hero: "Like I said, I only caught a glwimpse before I cwovered her up!"

The Demon King: "Hero. Do you really want to go back to the way you used to be?"

The Hero: "?!"

The Demon King: "Dammit!"

The Chief Maid: "Please think about what it means for you to deflower a young maiden like that."

The Hero: "I'm weally sowwy."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "...*Sobs.*"

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Demon King: "...Right, so where was I?"

The Chief Maid: "We've discussed the Tribes of the Fiends, the Pale, the Fang and the Automatons."

The Hero: "There're... four left?"

The Demon King: "Alright... so the Dragons."

The Hero: "Oww. I know at least a bit about the Dragons."

The Demon King: "That's right, you've met with the Fire Dragon Lord before."

The Hero: "We made a bet over the City of the Gate."

The Demon King: "The Dragons are a Tribe of battle-hardened veterans who place a strong emphasis on chivalry. Their current Khan is the Fire Dragon Lord. The Dragon Races can come in many forms, looking like dragons or looking like humans, but they all boast incredible magical abilities. They have many hidden forms of magic which are limited to their bloodline. Most Dragons are humanoid, but with dragon-like features such as horns or scales. They are also an isolated Tribe that lives primarily in the mountainsides, avoiding contact with the other Tribes. However, they are definitely not foolish, and they can tell that sooner or later, they must begin to assimilate with the rest of society. Having spoken to the Fire Dragon Lord myself, I can tell he is no fool. However, as he represents the interests of his entire Tribe, who have far more predictable attitudes, he is likely to stay in the middle ground."

The Chief Maid: "Indeed."

The Hero: "Well, it looks like it won't be easy to bring the Demon Tribes to an agreement with our proposal."

The Demon King: "Next is the Tribe of the Giants."

The Hero: "Oh, those massive guys?"

The Demon King: "That's right. Speaking of which, most are twice as tall as I am, though there are even some who are three times as tall. They live to the Northeast side of the subterranean world. They are also divided into many branch tribes: some who live in the mountains, some who live in the forests, some who live in the hills. There are all kinds really. There are also some who are incredibly violent but those are the extremists. I wouldn't say most of them are that violent. If you talk to them, they are actually a simple and direct people."

The Hero: "So are they our allies?"

The Demon King: "That part is a bit difficult. Their ancestors used to roam the world above freely."

The Hero: "Now that you say it, I've often heard tales of giants walking the land."

The Demon King: "They definitely don't have good relations with the Humans. Giant tales are filled with stereotypical Human characters, whom they see as petty villains who are out to deceive the Giants for no reason other than profit. Even their children are told these stories from a young age. They don't want the Gate to the Human World to be closed. You could say that they are a faction who would be content to be left alone. However, if you were to force them to make a choice, I would think that they would choose to co-exist with the Humans."

The Hero: "Just what did my ancestors do to them..."

The Demon King: "Well, there's nothing for it."

The Hero: "They actually seem like fairly decent folk."

The Demon King: "If you meet some of them, you'll find they are very avid drinkers."

The Hero: "Who's left?"

The Demon King: "The Tribe of the Banshees are a race of horned Demons. They are a very complicated Tribe who control the East of the subterranean world. There are those among them who are highly proficient with weaponry, and also those who are skilled mages. They are renown for some members who are able to use their Demonic powers to shapeshift and even turn invisible... You know that in the Demon World, there are some creatures you could call animals who possess only a rudimentary sentience, right?"

The Hero: "Yeah?"

The Demon King: "Well, the Banshees are exceptionally adept at controlling these creatures. The world has seen a lot of their abilities, as I'm sure you recall. They have managed to bring many races under their umbrella, and the land they control is massive. They do not have much persuasive power, but that is because they are unconcerned with the rest of the Demon Tribes as a whole. Generally, they are concerned with maintaining the balance of the Worlds. As a result, they oppose the invasion of the Human World. But they're definitely against co-existence as well. If possible, they would probably like for the two worlds to remain wholly divided."

The Hero: "I see. I don't think I have many Banshee acquaintances."

The Demon King: "There aren't many in the region around the City of the Gate."

The Chief Maid: "They are very famous for their wine. And their rice."

The Hero: "Rice..."

The Demon King: "It's a crop which is harvested in warm and humid regions. It's very similar to wheat, but it has very narrow conditions which must be met before successful harvest can commence. In return, the taste and yield of rice is far more bountiful than wheat."

The Chief Maid: "Very much so."

The Demon King: "It's all about the climate, the Southern United Kingdoms are definitely not suitable."

The Hero: "Then, the last I know as well. The Tribe of the Fairies."

The Demon King: "Hmm, well their current Khan is the Queen of the Fairies. They were originally a confederation of Demon Tribes that used to live in the Forest but over time, they had assimilated with each other and now the Queen of the Fairies rules over them from her Palace."

The Hero: "And the Fairies are our allies?"

The Demon King: "Yes, you could say that they are the only pro-co-existence faction. They did not suffer significantly under the Holy Crusaders and hence harbour no resentment against the Humans. Their form is considered fairly beautiful and it is likely that they will get along well with the Humans."

The Chief Maid: "The Queen of the Fairies is a highly astute individual."

The Demon King: "The Fairies are a little bit mischievous, but they are a Tribe of war-hating pacifists. They have average magical abilities and their combat ability is rather low. They were often the first to be sacrificed whenever Demon Civil Wars broke out."

The Hero: "That being said, before the war with the Humans, there was some kind of war between the Demons, right? What was that about?"

The Chief Maid: "That was truly Chaos."

The Hero: "Chaos...?"

The Demon King: "Fundamentally, there were two wars going on at the same time, between the Banshees and the Pale, and between the Fiends and the Fang, but the flames of war spread very quickly. Eventually, even those Tribes who had nothing to do with the conflict were pulled into it."

The Chief Maid: "It was an era of bloodshed."

The Hero: "Didn't you try to put a stop to it?"

The Demon King: "Of course I did. I even tried to get a Kurultai going. If the Humans hadn't started a war with us... No, that was inevitable."

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Hero: "That's true, though."

The Demon King: "Hmm."

The Hero: "As I thought, this is going to be tough."

The Demon King: "Yeah."

The Hero: "The only Tribe that supports co-existence with the Humans is the Tribe of the Fairies, right? So to get this unanimous support thing, we're going to need to persuade just about every other Tribe in the Demon World. Persuading seven Demon Tribes isn't going to be easy at all. We've got to think of some kind of method."

The Demon King: "I don't need co-existence with the Humans."

The Hero: "Eh?"

The Demon King: "It's fine if we don't have co-existence. For the time being, a ceasefire is enough for me. If we can lock down the World for now, that would be good."

The Hero: "Lock down?"

The Demon King: "Seal the Worlds. Put a stop to inter-world exchanges."

The Chief Maid: "Can we do that? Without a gate?"

The Demon King: "Well, we definitely can't do it perfectly, but it'll serve our purposes."

Of course, there's no meaning if we seal the worlds and yet the war still goes on, so we have to get the Humans, or at the very least, a few of the countries to agree to a ceasefire."

The Hero: "Is that really what you want? Weren't you aiming for co-existence?"

The Demon King: "That's true, but everything must be done in progression. Currently, our most urgent goal is to put an end to the war immediately. Right now, because I'm supposed to be recuperating, we're in a state of ceasefire, but since we have not settled on any terms or anything, this isn't a real ceasefire. — In other words, we are still at war with the Humans. In this state, even the smallest altercation could retrigger an all-out war. The Demons of the Pale have invaded the Human World unilaterally just a while ago, but because I was out of action, there was nothing I could say."

The Hero: "Is that so..."

The Demon King: "For the moment, the aim is to achieve a ceasefire. Peace and conciliation are things we can only think about when the war is over. There is value for both worlds if we can achieve conciliation between the Surface World and the Underground world. That's why I'm not too worried about it. I'm an economist after all."

The Hero: "Trade?"

The Demon King: "Yes. From the perspective of the Underground World, the Surface World is a treasure trove. From salt to metal to wheat, from lamb to fish, the world above is abound with things that the Underground World desires. It's the same from the perspective of the Surface World. Spices, gold, tea. If we can achieve peace, even with the world locked down, there will still be contact between the world below and the world above. Of course, it's because there's no gate. As people pass between the worlds, due to differences in opinion and ideology, they may come into some form of confrontation."

However, on an individual basis, individual Demons and individual Humans may come to understand the nature of each of their different existences. In time to come, co-existence may even be possible.”

The Hero: “I see.”

The Demon King: “Even a temporary ceasefire agreement will be enough to change the opinions of many of the Tribes. Even without co-existence, as long as we can prevent any extreme actions, it’ll be good enough. The extremist factions are the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale, the Tribe of the Fang, and the Tribe of Automatons; these three tribes. We can do our best to persuade those three, or convince the Tribe of Banshees to support cross-world exchanges on the grounds of trade. Either way, I believe we can effect some sort of ceasefire.”

The Hero: “If you think about it... that sounds a lot more difficult than before.”

The Demon King: “Does it?”

The Hero: “Yeah, how can we do anything about it?”

The Demon King: “What are you saying? Until we try...”

The Chief Maid: “Your Majesty.”

The Demon King: “...”

The Hero: “...”

The Demon King: “...”

The Hero: “Well, fine! Let’s deal first with what we’ve got ahead of us.”

The Demon King: “...”

The Hero: “How difficult. Well, looks like we’re not going to resolve this Kurultai in the next few days. Do we have plans to deal with those three Tribes?”

The Demon King: “Well, we’ll start after tomorrow’s negotiations.”

The Hero: “And the war?”

The Demon King: "Let's work on buying us some time first."

----- **The Demon World, a City, in a Tavern**

Butler: "Karate?"

Demon Traveller: "No, Kurultai. It's the Kurultai."

Butler: "The Kurultai."

Demon Traveller: "Which mountain have you come down from, Grandpa?"

Butler: "What! I'm not from the countryside!"

Demon Traveller: "No. No matter how you look at it, it's obvious that you are."

Butler: "That's probably true."

Demon Traveller: "Well, that's fine. Thank you for saving me from those bandits!
Grandpa, you're really strong!"

Butler: "People used to say I was a true master."

Demon Traveller: "Used to?"

Butler: "Well, I still am a true master. Especially at *that*." *Wink, wink.*

Demon Traveller: "Hahahaha! Grandpa, you're still young at heart!"

Butler: "Nyohohohoho!"

Demon Traveller: "Well. Thanks to you, my goods are fine as well."

Butler: "This Kurultai thing sure is bustling."

Demon Traveller: "That's right. It's a big conference."

Butler: "Hoho!"

Demon Traveller: "It may be very bustling, but that's because it only takes place once every few decades and nobody knows when. The Khans of all the Tribes will be in attendance, and even His Majesty the Demon King will take part."

Butler: "The Demon King?"

Demon Traveller: "You mean His Majesty the Demon King?"

Butler: "That's what I mean! His Majesty, His Majesty! Nyohohohoho."

Demon Traveller: "I've got me here a shipment of maize that I'm taking to the Kurultai."

Butler: "Oh? Even if you go there now, I don't think you're going to make it in time."

Demon Traveller: "A Kurultai can go on for as long as a month. Even if the Kurultai ends early, to commemorate the event there'll probably be a massive feast. Not just maize, but many other goods will be in demand and lots of merchants will flock there. You can probably buy all sorts of amazing things, it is an individual experience after all."

Butler: "I see, how wonderful."

Demon Traveller: "Well then, bottoms up!"

Butler: "Bottoms up!"

Demon Traveller: "Bottoms up!"

Butler: "Nyohohoho, this is delicious!"

Demon Traveller: "It is, isn't it? They make wine from maize in these parts."

Butler: "Nyohoho, it's great!"

Demon Traveller: "Right then, I'll be on my way!"

Butler: (...The Kurultai. A massive, military Demon Conference for which even the Demon King will show his face... I bet there'll be an unlimited wealth of information over there.)

----- The Kurultai, on the back of a Horse

Young Merchant: "Aren't you concerned about this?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "A promise is a promise."

Young Merchant: "There's a right time and place for these sorts of things."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Would you have me discard our contract?"

Young Merchant:..."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Or should I make it null and void?"

Young Merchant: "I understand."

Fire Dragon Lady: "I fear you do not."

Young Merchant: "If I have made a mistake, I will reflect on it."

Fire Dragon Lady: "If you will accompany me tomorrow morning, I will give you the opportunity to reflect then."

Young Merchant: "No, I don't think this is a particularly good time to be drinking."

Fire Dragon Lady: "They even say wine is the secret to longevity."

Young Merchant: "I don't think it applies when one drinks as much as you do."

Fire Dragon Lady: "We can go and ask my husband."

Young Merchant:..."

Fire Dragon Lady: "You seem nervous."

Young Merchant: "Oh, you can tell? The currency in the Central Continent is fast depreciating as well."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Come back safely."

Young Merchant: "I hope he makes some good fertiliser when he grinds my bones up."

----- The Kurultai, the Pavilion of the Dragon Tribe

Fire Dragon Lord: "Who is it?"

Young Merchant: "Good afternoon, I apologise for the intrusion."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Who are you? Attendant, what are you doing?"

Attendant: "My Lady is the one who saw fit to introduce him to you."

Young Merchant: "It is a pleasure to meet you."

Fire Dragon Lord: "...Fine. Who are you, Human?!"

Attendant: "H-human?! He's a human?!"

Fire Dragon Lord: "You smell different."

Young Merchant: "Very discerning, Your Excellency the Khan of Dragons. I am the Young Merchant. I am one who conducts an enterprise in the Human World."

Fire Dragon Lord: "A what?"

Young Merchant: "I buy and sell merchandise."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Hmph, whatever. I've done my part by seeing you since you were introduced by my daughter. Now be gone."

Young Merchant: "I will not."

Fire Dragon Lord: "What are you saying? Is this how a human behaves?"

Young Merchant: "No, I do not wish to leave."

Fire Dragon Lord: "I will turn you into ash."

Young Merchant: "There was one whom you could not turn to ash, was there not?"

Fire Dragon Lord: "..."

Young Merchant: "Yes, that's right. The Black Knight."

Fire Dragon Lord: "You know of this?"

Young Merchant: "All of it."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Attendants!"

Attendant: "Yes!"

Fire Dragon Lord: "Leave us."

Attendant: "As you will, my Lord!" *Attendants leave.*

Young Merchant: "..."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Who the hell are you? Wherefore have you come?"

Young Merchant: "Actually I have a contract. To a merchant, this is the highest responsibility, so I have come, bound by this contract."

Fire Dragon Lord: "..."

Young Merchant: "The terms of the contract state simply, 'I will beat the Fire Dragon Lord black and blue.' That's how it is."

Fire Dragon Lord: "How merchant-like. And will you?"

Young Merchant: "I cannot."

Fire Dragon Lady: "So you give up... Not unlike that man."

Young Merchant: "However, this is not a case which I can surrender."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Then prostrate and beg for forgiveness from the one who gave you the contract."

Young Merchant: "No, no, I cannot do that either."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Why?"

Young Merchant: "If I am unable to uphold my end of the contract, the indignation I feel will more or less heal in time as I make amends for my mistakes. However, since I intend to uphold my contract, I do not think the indignation I feel if I fail will heal."

Fire Dragon Lord: "You have a very big mouth."

Young Merchant: "Hence, I have a request... would you lose to me?"

Fire Dragon Lord: "What are you saying? Have you gone insane? Hmph! I should turn you into ashes after all. Rest assured. In an instant, all that will be left are your charred remains."

Young Merchant: "I will stop the salt."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Huh?"

Young Merchant: "At present, 90% of all salt which flows through the City of the Gate are in my hands. I have the ability to stop all of it."

Fire Dragon Lord: "...What?"

Young Merchant: "The Wealthy Demon Merchant is a fairly powerful member of the Tribe of Dragons, am I correct? The salt which he currently has a monopoly over is all mine. I assure you this is the truth."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Despicable."

Young Merchant: "This time, I'm actually gambling with my life. I have to be despicable."

Fire Dragon Lord: "...Damn you."

Young Merchant: "I understand that salt is a valuable commodity in these parts. Since the Dragon Tribe relies significantly on it, I am sure you do not wish for this to stop. In fact, in doing business with the Underground World, having the Dragon Tribe as my new business partner has been nothing but successful, and I hold deep respect for you."

Fire Dragon Lord: "First you try to blackmail me, now you flatter me?"

Young Merchant: "I have something I wish for you to buy."

Fire Dragon Lord: "...What are you trying to sell?"

Young Merchant: "In truth, this is about the Isle of Light, which was taken by the Human Army last year. I have an agreement to rent the island as of now."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Rent?"

Young Merchant: "That's right. I'm borrowing the island indefinitely. At present, we are upgrading the old facilities and creating Salt Pans across the island. I want you to buy this salt."

Fire Dragon Lord: "You want me to buy it?"

Young Merchant: "That is correct."

Fire Dragon Lord: "What are your terms?"

Young Merchant: "I believe I will be able to sell you a third of all the salt produced in these salt pans."

Fire Dragon Lord: "...You want me to get all my salt from you."

Young Merchant: "I want to have preferential trading rights. We can decide on the price every year. However, when it comes to the price, we must both reach a consensus based on the market prices."

Fire Dragon Lord: "..."

Young Merchant: "I'm sure I do not need to tell you that this one-third will amount to all the salt that was sent to the Underground World from the Isle of Light when the Demons still controlled it. Please also consider the price involved in building the salt pans and harvesting the salt in the first place."

Fire Dragon Lord: "..."

Young Merchant: "..."

Fire Dragon Lord: "You drive a strong bargain."

Young Merchant: "One must bargain strongly if one wants to reach any kind of deal."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Hmm... Salt is something my Tribe cannot do without. Without salt, many will even lose their lives."

Young Merchant: "..."

Fire Dragon Lord: "What do you want? My head? Merchant!"

Young Merchant: "...No."

Fire Dragon Lord: "..."

Young Merchant: "I just want you to lose to me."

Fire Dragon Lord: "...I'm sure you know, but that is something I hate."

Young Merchant: "Of course. I'm a merchant. I'm sure you have not enjoyed the high-pressure negotiation we have just gone through. And of course, there's the matter of personal pride."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Hmph. Where has chivalry gone to."

Young Merchant: "No, I am only concerned with profit margins. This may be meaningless, but it is also highly profitable. In future, if you wish for the possibility of us being partners, I want to be able to work with you directly."

Unless you would rather that we conduct negotiations through many intermediaries, separated by many walls..."

Fire Dragon Lord: "I said I can't do it."

Young Merchant: "Ahh—How troublesome. I'll stop then. The ones who'd have an issue with this are those two anyway."

Fire Dragon Lord: "?"

Young Merchant: "Right then. Here are the plans for the building of the salt pans on the Isle of Light, as well as information about the forecasted productivity, salt composition, import-export schedules, and cost estimations. All of these are enclosed in the proposal as well.

"...The Union will temporarily borrow the Isle of Light for 20 years, during which we will develop the salt pans and obtain permits to carry out our import business. By right, we should be drinking tea and discussing this over numerous sessions, but that's a matter of pride for us merchants with our intuition and our abacuses, so I'll spare you that exchange. I'll tell it to you straight up. This venture is to be split between us."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Split...?"

Young Merchant: "That's right. We would like for you to come up with some of the capital for this project. This project is likely to cost, in human terms, 3,000,000 gold pieces. If you look at it another way, in response to the amount of funding you are willing to provide, you will receive a suitable share of each year's salt. Of course, you can choose how much you are willing to purchase from that amount."

Fire Dragon Lord: "So I'm still buying salt in the end, right?"

Young Merchant: "It's completely different."

Fire Dragon Lord: "..."



Salt Pans: Structures which are built in order to extract salt from sea water. In principle, they consist of wide expanses of land onto which a thin layer of sea water is introduced. Under the heat of the sun, the water content evaporates, leaving highly-concentrated edible salt water. Outside of Japan, there are even salt pans which are intended to cause the salt to crystallize and form a crust of pure salt crystals.

Young Merchant: “This is a type of accord.”

Fire Dragon Lord: “Accord...?”

Young Merchant: “With the existence of this contract, we, the organization known as the Union, agree to provide salt to the Tribe of the Dragons. If expand this project, the Tribe of the Dragons will gain not just salt, but the expansion of their trade networks for further prosperity. In the same way, as the Tribe of the Dragons grows stronger, and upholds your end of the agreement, we will gain business experience and a foothold in the market to raise our profits over time.”

Fire Dragon Lord: “...”

Young Merchant: “I’m sure you understand. We intend to use the salt trade as an intermediary to give us both some insurance. In order to link our prosperity and our profits, our profits and your prosperity, I want to seal it with these new terms... in this contract.”

Fire Dragon Lord: “How can I believe you?”

Young Merchant: "All the information you need are in these reports. I have no qualms with you inspecting the grounds as well, and if you wish, I will be able to get a writ from the Wealthy Demon Merchant as further guarantee."

Fire Dragon Lord: "..."

Young Merchant: "We want the Demon World to be our new market."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Market, eh?"

Young Merchant: "..."

Fire Dragon Lord: "And my daughter will be your client?"

Young Merchant: "I'm afraid I cannot answer that."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Fine. I will consider your proposal."

Young Merchant: "..."

Fire Dragon Lord: "I understand your need for funding from us, but I do not hold any of your Human money. Will you accept gold bullion?"

Young Merchant: "Of course."

Fire Dragon Lord: "So basically what you want me to do is offer you funding, without the exchange of goods and services, suspending the delivery of the goods, leaving me empty handed?"

Young Merchant: "Yes."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Provide me with a list of goods for which I can offer you export. Do you have any other points of contact besides the Wealthy Demon Merchant?"

Young Merchant: "I do not."

Fire Dragon Lord: "—Don't you want to monopolise the market?"

Young Merchant: "I have more than enough."

Fire Dragon Lord: "I have lost... Convey that to my daughter."

Young Merchant: "..."

Fire Dragon Lord: "Don't make that face. Since I am making this long-term deposit, I wouldn't want there to be any problems between the merchant and the client, right?"

Young Merchant: "Yes..."

Fire Dragon Lord: "I'm not sure if I have to apologise to the Black Knight now. Hahahahaha!"

----- The Kurultai, the Pavilion of the Banshee Tribe

Banshee Attendant: "So, you intend to switch to the Ceasefire Faction?"

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Yes."

Banshee Attendant: "We are blessed with a decisive Witch-Queen."

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "We Banshees live incredibly far away. Without a gate, we will have to traverse immense distances if we want to reach the Surface World. If we just watch the war take place from afar, we'll reduce our casualties, though we won't make any gains."

Banshee Attendant: "So you have no intention to gain lands in the Human World?"

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "It's true that our people will profit from an increase in land, but protecting the borders of this new land may exact a greater toll on us."

Banshee Attendant: "That is one way of looking at it."

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Assuming we detour around the exclusive lands of the Demons of the Pale, we would have to cross through the territories of the

Fiends and the Dragons to get all the way there. Without thinking of our methods, we wouldn't be able to reap many benefits.

"At the very worst, we would send many soldiers to participate in this battle for Demonkind, but the only ones who reap the benefits are the Demons of the Pale and the Dragons, whose borders are closeby."

Banshee Attendant: "The balance of power would really shift if that happened."

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "To begin with, the present Demon King supports a ceasefire."

Banshee Attendant: "Yeah, even though she hasn't said anything explicitly about it yet."

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "...Hmm."

Banshee Attendant: "The Demon King is a real enigma."

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "The previous Demon King was a very easy person to understand."

Banshee Attendant: "Yeah."

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "To begin with, this Demon King comes from some small Tribe which I've never even heard of. She hasn't drawn on the armies of either our Tribe or any other Tribe, yet somehow she's managed to create twenty years without war."

Banshee Attendant: "It looks like her luck is running out?"

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "According to the seer, she has a month."

Banshee Attendant: "...Heh. Is it because of sickness or injury?"

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "It's hard to say."

Banshee Attendant: "Well, she seems like the kind who would do something foolish."

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "I don't dislike a Demon King who is unreliable and uncertain... Though other people might not think that way."

Banshee Attendant: "Well, she does give us a degree of autonomy."

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "I know."

Banshee Attendant: "So about this ceasefire."

Witch-Queen of Banshees: "I'm counting on you to spread the word to the Khans of the Branch Tribes. Do up a written announcement for the magistrates."

----- **The Village of Wintering, the Mansion of the Demon King, the Kitchen**

Little Sister Maid: "Are you alright?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I'm fine, I'm fine. Everyone's worked really hard, so I'm counting on you to make something delicious for them."

Little Sister Maid: "Yup! Next up is a bacon and asparagus pie along with some steamed kidney on a bed of watercress."

Elder Sister Maid: "Do your best!"

Disciple Merchant: "Hey, what about us?"

Disciple Soldier: "I'm getting really hungry."

Disciple Nobleman: "You guys are so inelegant."

Disciple Merchant: "Even though you say that, you're pretty weak too, right?"

Disciple Nobleman: "It was a cloudy day. It happens sometimes."

Disciple Merchant: "So I heard somebody said something inspirational then went charging out with his weapons flying against the enemy?"

Disciple Nobleman: "I heard about that too. And now you're the Minister for Defence. You're the best out of all of us for sure."

Disciple Soldier: "I've been cheated..."

Little Sister Maid: "Alright! It's a new pie♪"

Elder Sister Maid: "There's wine too!"

Disciple Merchant: "Ohhh, thank you!"

Disciple Nobleman: "You two are as adorable as always."

Disciple Soldier: "Can't have a good meal without drink, right?"

Little Sister Maid: "Umm, Disciple Soldier? You saved us back there in the Kingdom of Metal, right? You were so cool."

Elder Sister Maid: "You were really gallant!"

Disciple Merchant: "What's this? Looks like we can't compare with you."

Disciple Nobleman: "That's right, that's right. I'm useless at saving damsels in distress, you must be really happy with yourself."

Disciple Soldier: "It is the duty of a soldier to save people in need."

Little Sister Maid: "They shouldn't fight..."

Elder Sister Maid: "That's right. Please don't."

Disciple Merchant: "No, no, this isn't a fight, right?"

Disciple Nobleman: "This is just bickering between friends."

Everybody eats.

Disciple Soldier: "I've been cheated..."

Disciple Merchant: "On another point, the Disciple Nobleman also..."

Disciple Nobleman: "?"

Disciple Merchant: "What's this I heard about the Kingdom of the Lake and the Kingdom of Red Horses?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Well..."

Disciple Soldier: "I've heard about it too!"

Little Sister Maid: "What, what, what?"

Elder Sister Maid: "What were you talking about?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Nothing important, ladies."

Disciple Soldier: "Hah! It's a real big deal."

Disciple Merchant: "There is a relative of the King of the Kingdom of the Lake, the country from which the Holy Order operates. Well, due to various factors, the family is a bit down on their luck, but she's still a member of the royalty. At a tender sixteen years of age, her beautiful and refined features led to her being known as the Flower of the Lake."

Disciple Soldier: "It's a splendid story. That being said, this pie is delicious!" *Nomnomnom*.

Disciple Merchant: "Well, I heard this second-hand from a bard. If the story is true, this Princess residing in the Palace, on her travels, came to meet the Prince of Red Horses, who had then taken up vows as a monk. — In the bright halls of the Order, neither of the two recognised the other."

Little Sister Maid: "Wow! It's like a story!"

Disciple Merchant: "The two fell in love in a single day! But they did not reveal their names nor their identities, no matter how many trysts they had. As time went by, urgent news was received regarding an impending national crisis. It might have been the inflation, or the declaration of war. The Prince of Red Horses was called back urgently to his country, and the Princess had also left for her Palace in a hurry."

Elder Sister Maid: "...Even royalty don't always have the freedom to lead the lives they want to."

Disciple Merchant: "Well, they do say it's hard work to be a King."

Disciple Soldier: "They were scammed into the job, just like me..."

Disciple Merchant: "They were truly lovers for whom the stars did not align. The Kingdom of the Lake had a custom of using its maidens as tools for making political marriages. The Prince of Red Horses also had to hurry to support his eldest brother in his gambit for the throne. No matter how you thought about it, the two were fated to part."

Disciple Nobleman: "...Yeah."

Disciple Merchant: "That's where the Disciple Nobleman came in. He had a few drinks together with the Prince of Red Horses and helped the Prince beat off a few brigands. As the Prince's friend, flying his banner, he participated in a few jousting matches and slowly eased his way into the Palace of the Lake, where the Princess lived. Now the Princess had long lived a cloistered life without much excitement, just staring out of the window. He quickly became a close confidante of the lonely Princess, who up to then, had no friends. He spent his time teaching her how to dance, and with preparation, in time, the Princess became the sterling example of what it meant to be a beautiful maiden."

Little Sister Maid: "How cool!"

Disciple Merchant: "The two lovers were reunited at a ball. Without realising it, the Prince of Red Horses had fallen in love a second time during the group dance, when he danced with a lady so beautiful she made flowers fall in love with her.

"That night, as the two enamoured lovers wondered if they would not just elope away together, the Disciple Nobleman explained their romance to the King. For political considerations, and because he was touched by the story, the King commended their youthful love. And of course, the two were wed. — Doesn't this sound like a fairy tale?"

Elder Sister Maid: "What a beautiful story!"

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah! Yeah!"

Disciple Soldier: "And yet you say I'm the only one here who's cool."

Disciple Nobleman: "It's not really that cool, is it? I'm just a supporting character in this story from head to tail."

Disciple Merchant: "No, no, you were crucial."

Disciple Soldier: "So you fought off a whole band of brigands?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Well, a few of them."

Disciple Soldier: "And you're useless at fighting..."

Little Sister Maid: "What?"

Disciple Nobleman: "It wasn't such a splendid battle like the ones they sing about in the street corners. They were impoverished and broken mercenaries, but there weren't a hundred of them. Actually, there were just fifteen, and they were all drunk out of their minds. Most of them were swiftly dispatched by the Prince as well. I suppose I did have a pretty interesting fight with their leader on horseback, though. I managed to take advantage of his carelessness to take him down but they accidentally started a fire as they were running away... Well, that's what happened anyway."

Little Sister Maid: "Is the Princess really as beautiful as they say?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Well... Yes. But she's a lot more of a tomboy than the stories suggest. She's really proficient with a *Flail*, and very brave as well. She's also highly intelligent, and a very spirited individual. Working in the Order, she was decked out in some pretty ancient-looking costume, but the light from the moon reflecting against the surface of the lake made her look exceptionally beautiful and kind, even though she laughs like a child."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Disciple Soldier: "Why does this guy..."

Little Sister Maid: "She sounds beautiful."

Disciple Nobleman: "Oh don't worry, you're so cute right now. I'm sure in five or six years, you'll be completely unable to stop the swarm of guys fumbling for your hand."

Little Sister Maid: "Ehehehe ♪"

Disciple Merchant: "What a flatterer."

Disciple Soldier: "So, you taught this girl how to dance, and you didn't have any designs on her?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Hahahaha, no, no, not at all. To begin with, she already had a boy that she liked, right? That being the case, of course I had no place in her heart or anywhere. I merely taught her how to be gentler in her voice and the intricacies and etiquettes of court life, along with maybe one or two dances. Well... She was very determined about all of this. I just helped her, but really, her passion did most of the work. Umm, and she also had a smile as pretty as a flower. When she smiled at me, there was nothing I wasn't willing to do to help her."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Disciple Soldier: "How nice... I also want a pretty lady."

Little Sister Maid: "Wow, you worked really hard! Here. Have another pie!"

Disciple Nobleman: "It would be my great honor, milady."

Disciple Merchant: "There will be many opportunities."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes."

Disciple Soldier: "I hope so..."

Little Sister Maid: "Here, you can have this potato. You saved us after all!"

Disciple Soldier: "Why do I just get a stingy potato, I'm the reason you're still alive."

Elder Sister Maid: "It was also a splendid job."

Disciple Nobleman: "And how is managing the tariffs and trade?"

Disciple Merchant: "Busy."

Disciple Soldier: "I would expect so."



Flail: A tool used to remove the edible part of a grain from the inedible chaff that surrounds it. On the top of a long pole, a shorter pole is attached with chains. By waving the long pole, the shorter can be used to smash the grain, generating a significant amount of force with minimal effort. Using the same shape, a deadly weapon can also be made for war.

Disciple Nobleman: "Well, that's work for you."

Disciple Merchant: "It's stressful... Well thankfully, the potato harvest has increased from last quarter. The results of the census are really starting to show."

Disciple Soldier: "I wonder if we can use what you guys are doing here in the Kingdom of Metal."

Disciple Merchant: "Things like censuses should be conducted as early as possible."

Disciple Nobleman: "On our end, we've constructed two more paper mills."

Disciple Merchant: "That's great! Replacing vellum with paper has really made everything cheaper and more convenient. It's quite wonderful."

Disciple Soldier: "Do we really have to do so much work?"

Disciple Merchant: "Making records is very important. Recording, archiving, and referencing are crucial to the accumulation of experiences. You can really learn a lot from things that have happened in the past."

Disciple Soldier: "Yeah, but if you keep records to such an extent, then you have to use formal and convoluted language. It's so troublesome..."

Disciple Merchant: "Well I can understand how that could be painful... That being said, the Lone Winter King rose to the throne at a very young age and somehow appointed me as his minister. He's more or less given me a free rein over things, and the older officials aren't really complaining, so I've been really doing things the way I want to."

Disciple Nobleman: "To do things in an elegant way, you've got to learn to make connections and build relationships. Gentlemen... Wouldn't you say that's the language of diplomacy?"

Disciple Soldier: "True, true."

Disciple Merchant: "Right, so what about you two sisters?"

Little Sister Maid: "Umm..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Sorry?"

Disciple Soldier: "What about the two of you?"

Little Sister Maid: "?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Do you mean..."

Disciple Merchant: "Hey, hey, didn't we have the same teacher?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes but we didn't have lessons in these sorts of things."

Disciple Nobleman: "Learning doesn't just come from formal lessons. Surely not everything you know comes from what you've been taught."

Disciple Soldier: "If you just relied on lessons, you wouldn't even know how to shit from your ass. That's scary. That's really scary."

Little Sister Maid: "Well, I learnt forty different recipes last year! Everyone says they're delicious!"

Disciple Nobleman: "That's amazing. I look forward to tasting your passionate cooking in the Palace from now on."

Disciple Soldier: "Definitely! You should come and learn how to make some dishes to go with the beer they serve in the pubs in the Kingdom of Metal."

Disciple Merchant: "Yep, yep, we'll be sure to recommend you to everyone we know!"

Elder Sister Maid: "I..."

Disciple Nobleman: "?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I haven't really done anything..."

Disciple Merchant: "Now, now, don't say that."

Disciple Nobleman: "We all know that you were the one who made that speech everyone thought was made by the Scholar."

Disciple Soldier: "That's right."

Elder Sister Maid: "But I didn't really do anything for that. In fact, I caused more trouble for everyone and even started a war. It wasn't the right thing to do. It was a huge mistake... I've been regretting that decision constantly ever since..."

Disciple Merchant: "But look at the result."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Disciple Nobleman: "We consider you to be our *little sisters*, so don't worry. I think you'll be capable of great and wonderful things once you become more confident of yourself."

TL Explanation

Little Sisters: In East Asian culture, a strong bond exists between those who have had the same master or teacher. In many ways, the brotherly/sisterly bonds which exist between two disciples may be even stronger than those between real, blood siblings.

Disciple Soldier: "It was a very brave thing to do."

Disciple Merchant: "You might have messed up some plans, but the injustice of the world might have been buried forever without you, wouldn't it?"

Disciple Nobleman: "..."

Disciple Soldier nods.

Disciple Merchant: "Yeah."

Little Sister Maid: "?"

Disciple Merchant: "Well, there's still time!"

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Disciple Nobleman: "We've got other things to talk about today."

Disciple Soldier: "That's right!"

Disciple Merchant: "I thought she would at least inform us, but her sudden disappearance has left me quite speechless."

Disciple Nobleman: "Damn. And I really went out of the way too."

Disciple Soldier: "I think I've got the most to complain about."

Disciple Merchant: "The one who should be saddest is me. She got me to come up with almost 50,000 gold pieces worth of various precious stones and jewels. It's so saddening, I want to cry."

Disciple Nobleman: "I went throughout the lands procuring twenty different soil samples. Making a nobleman like myself dig around in the soils throughout the world... She's a very mean person."

Disciple Soldier: "She got me to bring a whole caravan of metal ores of different purities. I had to pay for it out of my own pocket..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Oh yeah, I heard about that."

Disciple Merchant: "Do you think we could leave the goods here?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes, I will make arrangements to receive them from you later."

Disciple Merchant: "Just what is she doing?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Well, no one has ever been able to accurately predict just what goes through that genius mind of hers."

Disciple Soldier: "She's the kind of person who would invent a machine to shoot down the moon from the bottom of a well."

Little Sister Maid: "It sure would be great if the Mistress would come back for dinner with everyone!"

Volume 2 Chapter 10, “We, the Tribe of the Pale, contest the Seat of the Demon King!”

----- The Demon World, a Pavillion-covered Street, a Concourse

Wowww! Amazing! He's taken down six people!

Slam!

The Hero: “It’s my win.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “Damn you! Next! Who will come?! My brave heroes of the Fang!”

White Wolf Warrior: “I will be your opponent!” *Howls.*

The Hero: “Silver Tiger Lord. For insulting the Demon King, I will defeat ten of your so-called heroes as recompense.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “Fine, Black Knight!”

White Wolf Warrior: “You have fought well but it ends here!”

Roar.

The Hero: “Oh. You’re strong.”

White Wolf Warrior: “Ha! Once you’ve fought with me, you’ll never escape! The lower body strength of the Tribe of the Wolves is a legendary affair!”

The Hero: “Haiya!”

Sword flashes.

White Wolf Warrior: “What!? ...My stomach. Where is... Where is my stomach!”

Amazing. That Knight completely blew away the White Wolf...! It's incredible... How does he do that...

The Hero: "Sorry. I couldn't really hold back."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Next! Next one!"

Copper Bear Warrior: "You are no match for my unparalleled brute strength!"

The Hero: "But the Tribe of the Fang sure do have some excellent warriors. They're very strong and quite brave... Without magic, even I would be having a hard time."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Haha. Are you beginning to feel the true power of the warriors of the Fang?"

The Hero: "I didn't say that."

Copper Bear Warrior: "Haiya!" *Swipes.*

The Hero: "Haaaa!" *Slashes.*

Copper Bear Warrior: "?!"

That small sword cut the six meter long metal pole into half?! How sharp is that thing?! That's the true power of the Black Weapons of the Black Knight, the one they call the Sword of the Demon King...

The Hero: "What Black Weapons? It's just my skill."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Argh! Where are my Five Divine Generals! Where are they!"

General Crimson Shark: "It's time for me to make my appearance! Let's go, Black Knight!"

Stomps onto stage.

The Hero: "...Whoa. What do you have to eat to get that kind of power?"

General Crimson Shark: "The ground-up bones of small fish!"

The Hero: "Small fish? You've got to be kidding me, don't you eat any meat?!"

General Crimson Shark: "Hahahaha! Let's see if your feet can keep up!"

The Hero: "In a place like this, of course." *Brandishes sword.*

General Crimson Shark: "What?!"

Flash of light.

The Hero: "One hit!" *Slash.* "Two hits!" *Slash.*

General Crimson Shark: "Fast! How fast is this guy!"

The Hero: "That's nothing." *Slash.* "Invisible blade!"

Boom!

The Hero: "Hmph. That was enough."

Wh-what? What happened?! He did something so amazing in an instant. General Crimson Shark isn't even getting up. He's even convulsing. That was really something, he just collapsed straight up?!

The Hero: "That's the ninth. Last one then."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "..."

The Hero: "Listen up, Silver Tiger Lord! Everyone else too!"

Murmuring.

The Hero: "The Demon King is weak."

...What? Wh-what did he just say?!

The Hero: "The Demon King is indeed weak. She's different from the Silver Tiger Lord and would surely lose if she had to fight the warriors whom I have just fought."

Wh-what... The Demon King is weak? But she's the Demon King? I don't get it...

The Hero: "No, she's really weak. She's weaker than a Titan-class Demon. You can take it from me, she's weaker than some of her maids even. She's got no physical strength and she moves quite slowly. But just what is strength? It's undeniable that the Silver Tiger Lord is unparalleled on the battlefield. However, can a single person win against an army of tens of thousands? Of course not. At a time like this, even the Silver Tiger Lord has to lead an army to achieve victory. That's why, to achieve actual victory, you cannot rely on just one person. You've got to mobilise the entire Tribe, using them as the weapon."

"On her own, the Demon King is weak, but that doesn't matter. More so than a Demon King who leads with individual fighting strength, what the Demon World really needs is a Demon King who may be weak individually but is more than capable of commanding the great armies to achieve decisive victory. As a military commander, the Demon King is unparalleled. Moreover, the Demon King has another hidden ability, something even greater than mere military victory. That is the power to achieve a 'victory without war'. The power to achieve our goals and end without drawing a single sword, without a single injury on either front. It's true that the Demon King's goals may often be far-fetched and that it may be difficult to comprehend... But all that she does is for the good of the land. Ever since the Demon King took over the throne, the number of meaningless casualties on the battlefield has decreased dramatically, hasn't it?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "..."

White Wolf Warrior: "Isn't that just an excuse for her cowardice! Hasn't she just been running away from all these battles up till now!"

The Hero: "I took you down just now, so you're a corpse. Corpses aren't allowed to speak."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "!"

The Hero: "What do you think, Silver Tiger Lord?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "..."

The Hero: "The strength of the Demon King is one thing, but your unshakable strength is another that I cannot deny."

The Hero: "The Demon King is weak. But the battlefield requires battle-strong people. You, with your incredible experience and fortitude, are required."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "...I understand."

The Hero: "Then."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "I will apologise to the Demon King. I believe the Demon King really holds this power that you say she does, seeing as you are the Sword of the Demon King. I must bow to your strength. The Tribe of the Fang will side with the Demon King."

The Hero: "Thank you."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "However, I continue to believe that the Demon King must have some strength."

The Hero:..."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "I have seen with my own eyes that you have defeated my warriors. I see and admit that you are strong, as you have said you are. However, I have yet to experience the Demon King's command on the battlefield. In fact, I cannot testify to the strength of anything she does. I cannot place my faith in something which I do not know."

The Hero: "...Didn't you say you would take my word for it?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "I trust you but not your script."

The Hero: "Well, I guess that's enough for now."

----- The Kurultai, the Pavillion-covered Street

Butler: "This is the conference venue of the Kurultai, it's almost like a small city."

Secret Agent: "Sir. We have eight agents from the Rear Intelligence Unit reporting."

Butler: "Nyohohoho. Find a suitable hill and put up a pavilion, pretending to be merchants. For the time being, we'll use that as our headquarters. Set up a logistics centre and put a few people on *Patrol Duty**."

Secret Agent: "Yes, sir!"

Runs off.

Butler: "Alright, what shall we do now? Nyohohoho."

Secret Agent: "Forward Intelligence Unit reporting in."

Butler: "Let's hear it."

Secret Agent: "There are at least 6,000 Demons gathered at this venue. In the gorges and valleys surrounding the area, there is also a fair number of guards. Not a lot, but enough to claim a military presence in the event of any hostilities."

Butler: "Hmm."

Secret Agent: "About a third of the Demons present here are lesser Khans, or other influential Demon figures linked to the Khans, their attendants, and their personal guard. The remainders are mostly merchants capitalising on these wealthy individuals hoping to sell their wares as well as ministers and mercenaries hoping to display their strength and attract contracts."

Secret Agent: "The Kurultai and the Conference of the Khans will be held at the massive Grand Pavillion for several days. Judging from a cultural perspective, it's difficult to say for certain but most of the attendants here believe that the Kurultai will last at least till the end of the month."

Butler: "So, one more week."

Secret Agent: "The pavilion directly beside the Grand Pavillion is the pavilion of the Demon King. The Demon King made a speech on the first day."

It's surprising, but the present Demon King is actually a woman. In other words, she's a Demon Queen."

Butler: "Hmm, Queen..."

Secret Agent: "However, it is clear that she is giving her pure and undivided focus to the Kurultai. This has been mentioned before but it appears that the ones who will control the Grand Pavilion, in other words, the Eight Great Khans, the Khans of extremely powerful Tribes, have been making audiences with the Demon King."

Butler: "Have you had any contact?"

Secret Agent: "We have not yet received the opportunity. So that we do not have an information leak, I have been trying to be as discreet as possible."

Butler: "That's fine."

Secret Agent: "Yes, sir."

Butler: "But, hmm..."

Secret Agent: "What's on your mind, sir?"



Patrol Duty: This refers to walking around the perimeter of an installation, keeping vigilant to ensure that the enemy does not conduct a surprise attack.

Butler: "Should I also go undercover?"

Secret Agent: "Is that alright?"

Butler: "Of course, I will have to be very careful. Since the rumours say that these streets concern the fate of the Conference and hence the world above, we can't afford to make any mistakes. Above everything, we need reliable intelligence.

Nyohohoho. Looks like I've got to do it."

Secret Agent nods.

Butler: "Let me teach you why they used to call me Sudden Death."

Secret Agent: "Y-yes."

Butler: "Nyohohoho."

Secret Agent: "Then I will return to the field."

Butler: "Understood. Establish contact at the headquarters."

Secret Agent: "Sir."

----- The Kurultai, the Pavilion of the Demon King

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "What's up, where did that come from?"

The Demon King: "It's a letter from the Witch-Queen of the Banshees."

The Hero: "And?"

The Demon King: "She supports the ceasefire."

The Hero: "Ohh... Wait, wasn't she from the Invasion Faction?"

The Demon King: "Yes, but it's completely different. There's a world of difference between 'I would like a ceasefire' and 'I would not like to go to war'.

The Banshees have a splendid military force. They were always rivals with the Demons of the Pale, so I think we've got to thank their assertiveness for changing the minds of the Banshees."

The Hero: "I see... And what of the Automatons?"

The Chief Maid: "I have delivered the gifts you requested. Precious stones, soil samples... They expressed great interest in our gifts."

The Demon King: "That's a good sign."

The Hero: "What's the point of that?"

The Demon King: "It'll definitely have an effect. For future progress, the Automatons are keen to secure rare ores and metals. I was hoping to demonstrate that it might be more stable to acquire these goods via trade."

The Hero: "That's a good idea."

The Hero: "Right. It was a bit blunt, but I told the Tribe of the Fang what you told me to say."

The Chief Maid: "How was it?"

The Hero: "As you predicted, they took the bait."

The Chief Maid: "Is that so, hahahaha."

The Demon King: "What do are you talking about?"

The Hero: "Well, you know how misogynistic the Tribe of the Fang is, right?"

The Demon King: "Yeah."

The Hero: "I goaded them into a fight by saying that I would defeat ten of their bravest warriors to make them take back the insult they made against you."

The Demon King: "Can you really do that?"

The Hero: "I'm the Hero after all."

The Demon King: "But surely that must leave them very frustrated with us."

The Hero: "Well, that's the strategy of the Chief Maid."

The Chief Maid: "Yes."

The Hero: "When the situation called for it, I praised the Silver Tiger Lord while presenting my case. I think it succeeded."

The Chief Maid: "I figured that if we cover the difficult-to-stomach news with words of praise and encouragement, then they might be more receptive. It's them after all."

The Demon King: "Wow, not bad."

The Hero: "I just nudged him in the right direction."

The Demon King: "Hmm, you would need an impeccable sense of timing for this."

The Hero: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "...Even though you're usually so lost."

The Hero: "Although, I was a bit pressed for time so I had to convince him about your leadership ability. The other Khans were very interested in that as well."

The Chief Maid: "That's right. I wouldn't say we've really prolonged it, but now the Khans are all very curious about your command ability on the battlefield."

The Hero: "We haven't made any inroads to the Demons of the Pale though."

The Chief Maid: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "It's about time, then."

The Hero: "Shall we go?"

The Demon King: "Yeah. I really want to know what the Banshees have got to say, and it'll be good to check out the reactions of the other Tribes as well. I'm especially interested in whether the Automatons have changed their views."

If we did it well, then the Demons of the Pale may be forced to support a ceasefire under the overwhelming weight of the other Tribes. Once that happens, we will have managed to isolate the Demons of the Pale as the only member of the Invasion Faction."

The Hero: "Indeed."

The Chief Maid: "Then, let's meet at the Grand Pavilion tomorrow."

The Demon King: "And so it begins..."

----- The Kurultai, the Grand Pavilion for the Conference of the Khans

Murmuring...

The Demon King: "Then, at this Kurultai, I would like to seek the views of my Eight Great Khans on our relations with the Human World."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Hmm..."

The King of the Pale: "This matter is very clear. We should march on them and destroy them."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Hmph! What of these humans! To begin with, the ones who came to pillage our green land, to set fire to our homes are those humans, right!"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "However, victory is not something that is assured."

The Cyclops: "Yes... Further involvement... will only increase... number of casualties..."

The Baron of Steel: "I am interested in the multiple mineral deposits located in the Surface World."

The King of the Pale: "If we conquer them, these deposits will be ours to use!"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "...That is reckless."

The Queen of Fairies: "I oppose this decision. We are two distinct Worlds. We may have fought each other and trespassed many times, but we are both weary of this. We now have the opportunity to walk along the path of peace."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Hmph! Coward Fairy."

The Demon King: "Silver Tiger Lord, please refrain from making irrelevant jibes during the Kurultai."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Hmph."

The Demon King: "I do not believe that with a ceasefire we will be able to co-exist harmoniously with the Humans. However, if we were to compare the military strength of the Underground World with the Surface World, it is clear that we cannot defeat them. The sporadic state of war which we are in now will never result in victory with these random ambushes but in the long-term will drain our revenues and make life difficult."

"In the first place, what happens if we win? Even if we manage to take down the Humans and split the lands of the humans among ourselves, can we really maintain these lands? Hasn't the Isle of Light proven anything?"

"I propose that we post strong garrisons along the poles where the destroyed gates between the worlds are, strictly monitoring any entrance or exit from these gates. We will allow any trade or flow of goods which are beneficial to us as the Demon Race, but I do not intend to allow free passage for humans. Since we have taken back the City of the Gate, neither of us have territory in the lands of the other. I believe that we must make them pay, however, considering the present situation, continuing the war is an irrational decision."

The Hero: "What an excellent speech. Surely they have nothing to say in retort."

The Chief Maid: "As expected from the Demon King."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "We, the Tribe of the Fiends, have no intention to alter our initial view. We will leave this decision to the Khans of the other Tribes and maintain our middle position."

The King of the Pale: "We the Tribe of the Pale have reached a unanimous decision, that the Human Race must be exterminated. They are a thorn in our side and the perpetrator of heinous crimes, they must be removed. That is the path of the Tribe of the Pale."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "We, the Tribe of the Fang are of the same view. If we turn the lands of the Humans into our Hunting Grounds then we can easily recoup the expenses of this expedition... However..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "However?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "To give time for us to make preparations, I feel that a temporary ceasefire is necessary, and so I lend my support to the Demon King."

The King of the Pale: "Silver Tiger Lord! Are you betraying me!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "What are you saying! Do not take me for a fool."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "We the Tribe of the Banshees oppose the war. We wish for a ceasefire."

The King of the Pale: "?!"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Having considered various factors, it is clear to us that this war will occur at the expense of many of our soldiers and without significant benefit. My lords will remember that it was the Tribe of the Banshees that occupied the Isle of Light in the Human World.

"However, we could not hold the Isle of Light. Why is that? The biggest reason is that the island alone was insufficient to support the supplies needed to maintain our troops. It is a regrettable thing to say, however at present, we are still squabbling among ourselves. I must say that we clearly lack the ability to continue with this war."

The Queen of Fairies: "We the Tribe of Fairies support the ceasefire. To begin with, we never supported the beginning of the war. Going one step further, we believe in meaningful cross-world exchange with the Human Race."

The Cyclops: "We... do not like... war... We support... the ceasefire..."

The Baron of Steel: "With a ceasefire, my Tribe will still require the goods of the Surface World. Our conditions for the ceasefire are trade with the Humans and possibly recompense in the form of material goods. — Under these conditions, we agree to a stop in the war with the Humans."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Well, since that's how it is, I've got no choice. The Tribe of the Dragons agrees to the ceasefire. Our original worry has always been the City of the Gate, but since that has been reclaimed and placed under the direct control of the Demon King, we no longer have an issue. If it had not been reclaimed, we would never have agreed to this."

The Demon King: "So, in summary... with various conditions, the number of Tribes that agree to the ceasefire are six. One Tribe takes the middle ground and the one Tribe who opposes the ceasefire is the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale..."

The Hero: "That went better than expected."

The Chief Maid: "Yes, the Tribe of the Fang changing their mind was a huge bonus."

The King of the Pale: "What a bunch of weaklings! Damn you! What has happened to the pride of the Demons! Are you willing to be trampled by that damn Human Race!"

The Queen of Fairies: "The ceasefire is the will of the Demon King."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Hmph. She may be impudent but the Demon King is the Demon King."

The Cyclops: "Yes..."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "We are a Federation of Tribes. The will of the Demon King combined with the support of the Khans is how we decide things."

The King of the Pale: "! You defeatists!"

The Demon King: "So. Heroes of the Pale, will you change your decision?"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "In that case, the Tribe of the Fiends also supports the ceasefire. We don't agree to complete peace and harmony with the Humans but if we do not break this impasse at the Kurultai then the Demon World may be launched into chaos again. We would like to avoid that. The Tribe of the Fiends supports harmony in the Demon World."

The King of the Pale: "—So."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "?"

The King of the Pale: "So, you place such a strong emphasis on the words of the Demon King, don't you? Then allow me to ask you. While it is the will of the 34th Demon King, Ruby Eyes, to have a ceasefire, was it not the will of the previous Demon King to go to war in the first place?"

The Baron of Steel: "If it is the will of the Demon King, we the People of Steel will don our armour and march bravely onto the battlefield without objection."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "The Tribe of the Fang believes that as well. Under the leadership of a brave and capable Demon King, we await the rich and prosperous lands that we will gain and the honour and glory of war."

The Queen of Fairies: "However, at present, the war is merely inflicting senseless casualties without any gain. In this case, I would rather preserve the lives of my people."

The King of the Pale: "But that is the responsibility of the Demon King! He is the one who leads the Demon Race to expand and glorify the Demon World. That's why we've never had a soft and kind-hearted Demon King from the Tribe of the Fairies.

"Are you saying that the Tribe of Fairies does not place its trust in every Demon King? Or what? The Tribe of Fairies may be an adorable race, but would you deny the Demon World its deserved prosperity!"

The Queen of Fairies: "Of course not..."

The King of the Pale: "We, the Tribe of the Pale, contest the Seat of the Demon King!"

The Cyclops: "!"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "What?!"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Do you think we will let you get away with that!"

The Demon King: "?!"

The Hero: "Wh-what?! What the hell?!"

The Chief Maid: "I don't understand. I didn't even think that such a thing was even possible."

The Queen of Fairies: "Don't be stupid! What right do you have to do this without the consent of the other Khans!"

The King of the Pale: "I can. It is stated plainly in *The Demon Annals*. It occurred under exceptional circumstances, but there are stipulations for it under the 8th amendment."

The Cyclops: "...Stipulations..."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "What does it say exactly?"

The King of the Pale: "According to *The Demon Annals*, to remove the Demon King at the Kurultai, a Khan need only obtain the support of half of the Khans. In other words, four Khans. This right has never been exercised before, but a stipulation is a stipulation."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "To think such a clause would exist..."

The Baron of Steel: "In her time as the Demon King, she has yet to gain any battlefield experience. Do you intend to question her ability to decide the fate of the Demon World through these troubled times?"

The King of the Pale: "Indeed I do."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "That's right, the Demon King should be someone fairly powerful."

The Baron of Steel: "...That is a reasonable proposition."

The Cyclops: "...The Demon King... should be... bigger..."

The Hero: "What are you saying?"

The Chief Maid: "Come on!"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "..."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "So we will impeach the Demon King... And who will be the new Demon King?"

The King of the Pale: "Just like when the Demon King falls, we will elect a new Demon King. As usual, we'll have the martial competition to decide the Demon King."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "This time for sure, the Demon King will be a member of the Tribe of the Fang."

The King of the Pale: "Indeed that may be so, and you will have the gratitude of the Tribe of the Pale. In any case, the next Demon King will surely be a stronger and braver Demon King."

The Cyclops: "We... the Giants... will bring honour..."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "...This is worth considering."

The Demon King: "..."

The Chief Maid: "The Demon King is turning green..."

The Hero: "Aren't you going to do anything?"

The Chief Maid: "This is completely unexpected..."

The King of the Pale: "Well then, shall we take a vote?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "No, wait."

The King of the Pale: "What?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "This is no small matter. I would like to request for more time to discuss this."

The King of the Pale: "What is there to discuss? If you believe in it, then just show your agreement and we can get this over with."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Indeed."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "No, what the Fire Dragon Lord says is correct. We cannot make such a decision without first consulting our Tribe. This decision has many implications after all."

The King of the Pale: "Hmph."

The Cyclops: "Dusk..."

The King of the Pale: "Fine. It will be dusk in two hours. I want to have the election at dusk. That leaves us with two hours to discuss whatever we need to discuss."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "...Fine."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Agreed."

The Queen of Fairies: "That's..."

The Demon King: "...Then."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "This election will decide whether or not the Demon King Ruby Eyes will continue to sit on the throne."

Your Majesty, as stated in *The Demon Annals* which you so revere, you may challenge the notion. However, you may rest easy for the two hours. No matter what happens, tonight we will decide what is to happen."

----- Epilogue

Arising from her light slumber, she forced her consciousness back into the painful world of the living and opened her eyes to the fuzzy light of day. Her memories and thoughts were a mess as the long, long period of loneliness and isolation had sapped most of her remaining strength. But even in this eternity, miracles happened as well.

That was the birth of the Hero.

Borne on the summer winds. Bathed in a glow of light. The saviour of the world.

She was not the only one from whose world, lying in the lands of the undying, hard and thorny like a craggy precipice, would be liberated. He was to be her saviour, the one of destiny.

This Hero was born.

There was a feeling of intense regret and misery. The birth of the Hero, would come to disrupt the balance of the world he was meant to save her from, creating vacuums as he went along. Her ability to predict events was considered to be omnipotent and infinite, but while she knew many, many things, she was not omniscient by far. As such, she had no way of predicting whether the world would be perfectly fine or would be consumed by the chaos.

However, the Hero was born into this undecided world. The soul of this black haired youth, delivered into the trap of this dangerous world, shone brightly with the courage and hope of being the saviour of the people of the world.

(But, maybe...)

Chapter 10

The chance was low, maybe one in thousands, in ten thousands, she did not know, but she felt hopeful. Maybe, maybe he would understand. He had never understood before in all her projections, but maybe a miracle might happen.

That day, as she extended her hand, she said those words of apology.

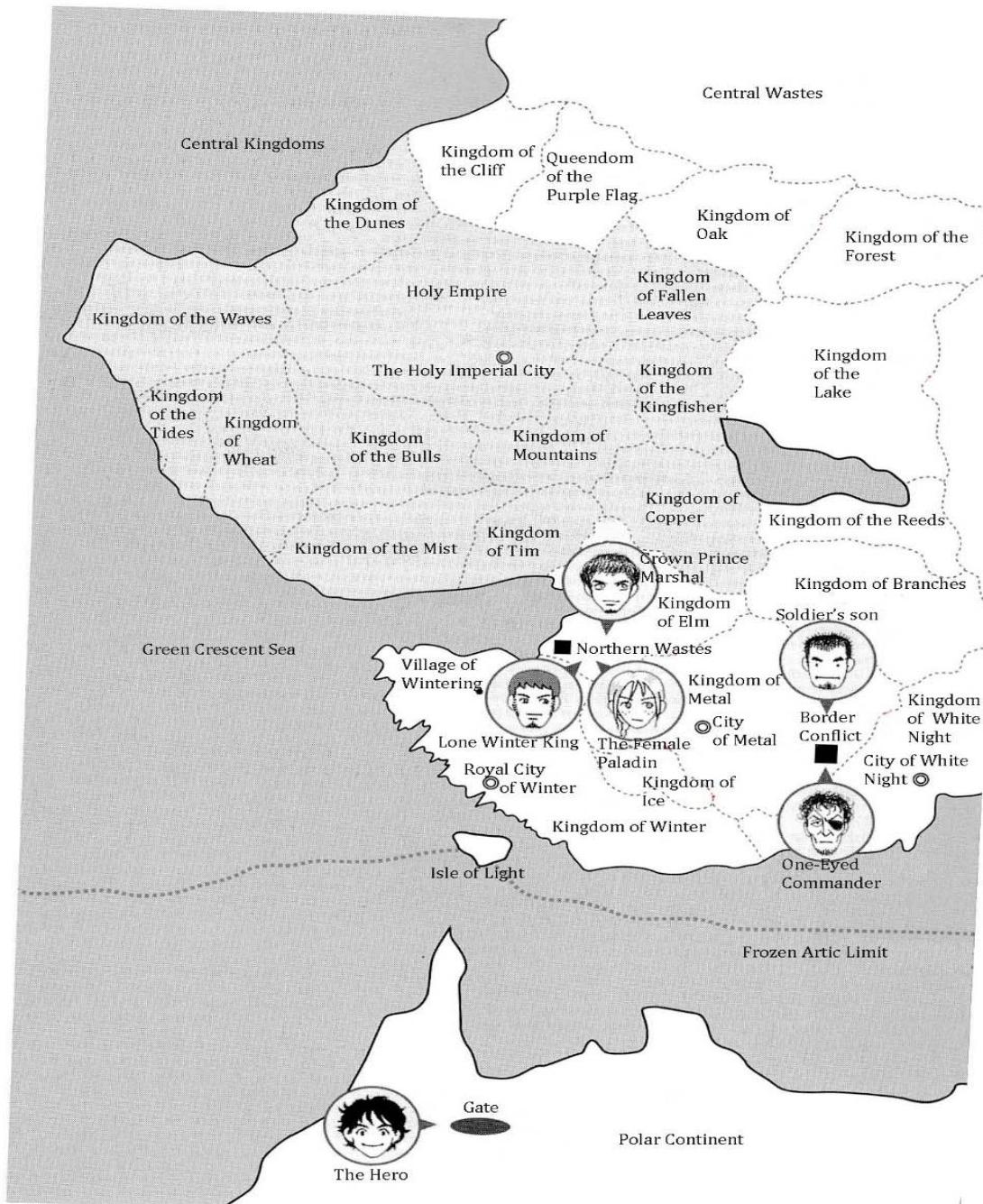
And she wondered, what was he thinking?

She reached out and hugged that shadow as it slipped away into the darkness, and fell back into her shallow slumber.

To be continued in Maoyuu Maou Yuusha Volume 3: The Holy Crusades

Maps and Explanations

The Stage of Danger --- The Central Continent ---



Maps and Explanations

The Central Continent is the centre of civilisation in this world. It is warm enough for the cultivation of wheat throughout the land and is also a manufacturing base, truly the centre of human civilisation.

However, because of its rich, viable land, wars have been fought continuously to gain control of it. At the very least, the region has been locked in conflict for hundreds of years.

As a result, much of the arable land has become wasteland and the blessings of the earth are not appropriately utilised.

However, everything changed twenty years ago in response to the Demon Invasion. The consensus was that the Human Kingdoms should no longer fight among each other, but instead respond to the bigger Demon threat. The Central Continent thus united and wars between countries were effectively abolished.

As a result of this, the agricultural sector stabilised and the economy became far stronger than it used to be. Of course, a lot of financial aid was also provided to the Kingdoms in the South.

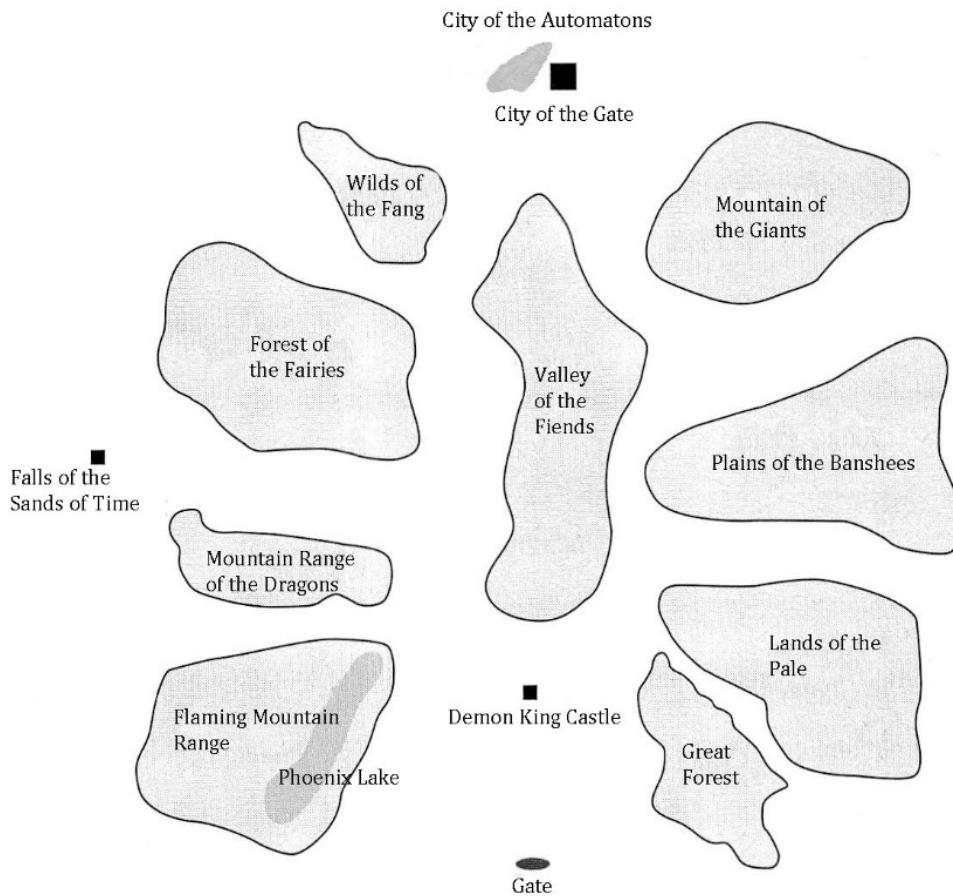
The now-united Central Continent boasted an economic power, political power, and military power that far exceeded any of the Kingdoms throughout the Human World. No Kingdom could exist so long as it opposed the might of the Central Continent.

The Kingdoms of the South which had to face the brunt of the Demon Invasion found themselves especially bound to the Central Continent through financial and food aid.

At the heart of the Central Continent is the Holy Empire, where the Primarch of the Church of the Holy Spirit resides. Since all Kingdoms receive their mandate to rule from the Holy Spirit himself through the Church of Light, the Holy Church and the Holy Empire have unparalleled power.

In the Central Continent, some might even say the Holy Church and the Holy Empire are one.

The Stage of Danger --- The Demon World ---



The Demon World is devoid of seas. As a result, salt is a true luxury. However, there are still streams and lakes flowing through the Demon World. Some of these lakes have very high salt contents, similar to the Dead Sea in the real world.

These are, although, insufficient to feed the demand for salt for the entire Demon World.

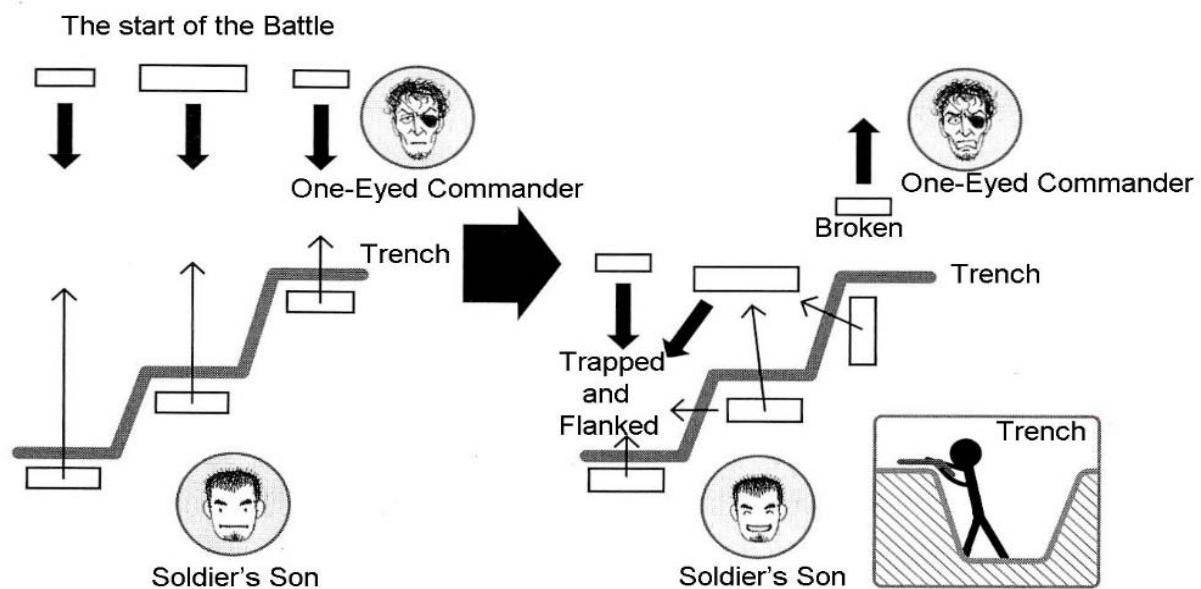
The Demon World is not structured into countries, but rather organised into Tribes without clear delineations and borders between them.

As a result, arable and liveable land is quickly claimed and settled by some Tribes, while land in which it is very difficult to support life is owned and lived by nobody.

The Demon World offers many disadvantages from the Human World, but many advantages as well. The Demon World is far warmer, due to its position on the latitude, and hence the weather does not change very much. This is very suitable for growing crops. Therefore the Demon World has such an abundance of food crops that famine is almost unheard of.

Trenches and Oblique Formations

The Vanguard of the Kingdom of White Night vs The Border Guard led by the Soldier's Son



The Disciple Soldier used two military innovations during this battle.

The first is the trench. First of all, being exposed during a ranged battle (here the weapon is the crossbow) is extremely dangerous. Furthermore, a shield that can stop an arrow has to be very thick, and hence very heavy.

However, by digging a hole in the ground, it is something which can be done by anybody and it is also cost-free. The earth is also a far stronger barrier than any shield. By exposing only the head, hidden behind a helmet, the danger of being struck by an enemy arrow is greatly reduced.

The second innovation is the oblique formation. This is a formation designed to bait and lure the enemy in. Basically, while the army may wish to advance in a straight line, if the enemy is attacking diagonally, the army may be forced to move diagonally in response. This can funnel the army towards a straight line while the enemy rolls up around and behind him, trapping and flanking the force.

Usually, a U-shaped formation is used to completely trap the enemy in the middle. However, due to terrain advantages and considerations, a half U or oblique formation, is sufficient to surround the enemy.



----- The Young Merchant's Lecture

Fire Dragon Lady: "What's this piece of paper... Hmm? — Wheat Future Certificate."

Young Merchant: "It's a type of contract."

Fire Dragon Lady: "What's a Wheat Future Certificate? I've never heard of it."

Maps and Explanations

Young Merchant: "That's because I've only just invented it. It's a contract that says: 'I would like to buy 100 sacks of wheat for 300 gold pieces next year. Here's the money, so just deliver the wheat when the time comes.' I pay money to the various landlords and wait for them to fulfil the contract. In other words, I pay first and get the goods later."

Fire Dragon Lady: "If you want wheat, why don't you just buy it directly?"

Young Merchant: "Of course, most merchants do that. They'll buy the wheat once it is harvested every year. Depending on the supply of wheat, the price will naturally change. But... Something very interesting happens when you use this certificate."

Fire Dragon Lady: "What's that?"

Young Merchant: "I'm sure you can figure it out for yourself."

Fire Dragon Lady: "...Hmm."

Young Merchant: "The hint is that, the higher the price of wheat, the better."

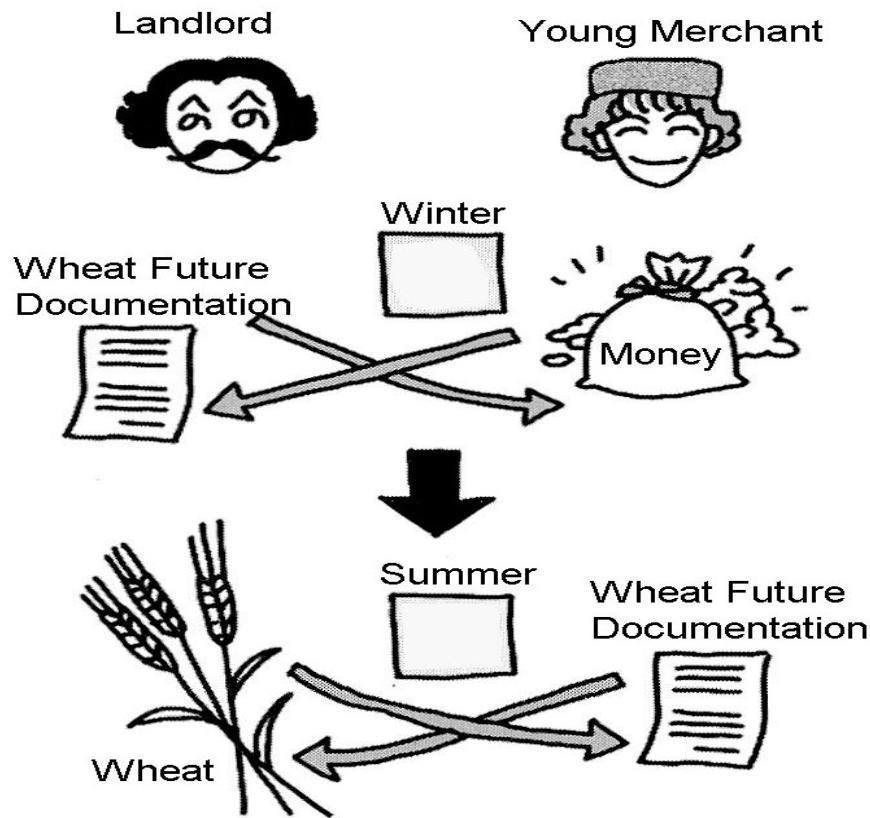
Fire Dragon Lady: "...Hmm, I see. So if the price of wheat goes up, then this contract is to your advantage. Using this contract you only pay the price of wheat at the time the contract was signed."

Young Merchant: "Correct."

Fire Dragon Lady: "But in reverse?"

Young Merchant: "Hmm."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Don't hmm me. If you invest lots of money into this and the price of wheat drops then what will you do? You've practically given your money to the landlords for free, haven't you?"



Young Merchant: "That's right. But there's a way for this to benefit everybody. Otherwise, this would be a very pointless contract. There are many landlords who urgently need cash, especially those that need to fight in wars. Using this contract, they can quickly raise up the capital to field their armies."

Fire Dragon Lady: "So how much wheat have you bought with this... Don't tell me..."

Young Merchant: "About 4,000,000 gold pieces worth."

Fire Dragon Lady: "?!"

Young Merchant: "Hahaha. I used up all the reserves of the Merchant's Union. That's the measure of my fighting power. With this much spending power, no one is out of my reach. Hahahahaha!"

Maps and Explanations

Fire Dragon Lady: "Four million—?!"

Young Merchant: "If the price of wheat climbs from 3 gold pieces to 4 gold pieces a sack, I will have made a profit of 1,300,000 gold pieces. If it climbs to 5 gold pieces, I will make 2,600,000."

Fire Dragon Lady: "But you could lose just as much. If the price falls to 2 gold pieces, then you'll lose 1,300,000 gold pieces. The debt—"

Young Merchant: "If that happens then I probably wouldn't be able to keep my head."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Why are you willing to gamble so much... What do you see, no, what are you hallucinating about?! This is just a senseless waste of money. Is this what merchants do?!"

Young Merchant: "—Milady. Do you know just how much is 4,000,000 gold pieces?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Well—I heard that a farmer makes about one silver piece for a day's work."

Young Merchant: "That is correct. A merchant makes about 100 gold pieces a year."

Fire Dragon Lady: "..."

Young Merchant: "That's an idea of how much it is. 4,000,000 gold pieces poured into these Futures represents about 20% of all the wheat produced in a year in the Central Continent."

Fire Dragon Lady: "20%?!"

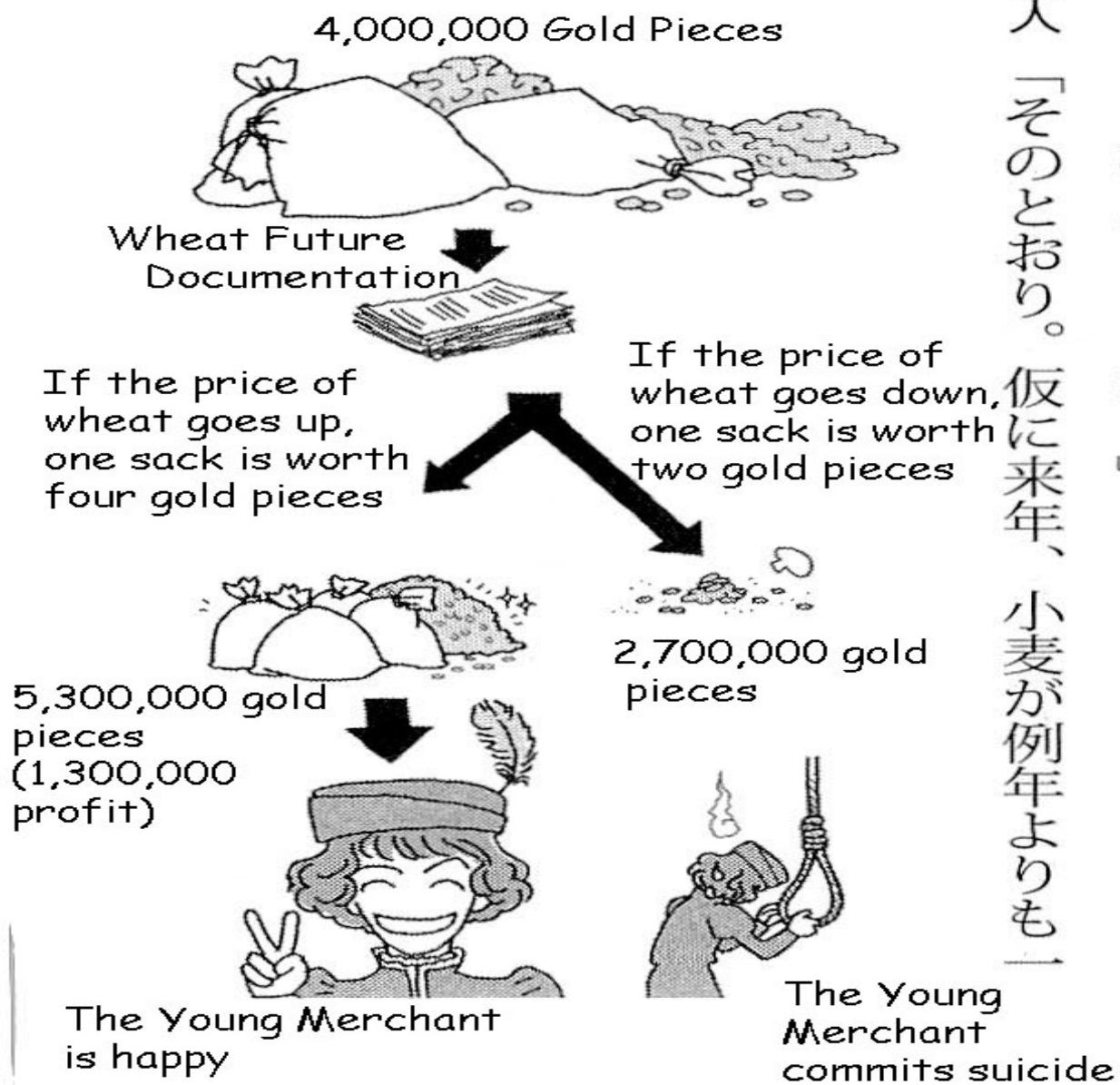
Young Merchant: "Let's assume that next year, the wheat harvest is extremely successful. The price of wheat will drop. Do you know why?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Because when the harvest is good, there is more wheat..."

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Young Merchant: "That is correct. Let's assume that next year, the production of wheat goes up by 10%, either way I've bought 20% of all the wheat. In other words, as long as the production of wheat doesn't go up dramatically, the total amount of wheat in the market has effectively decreased. And hence, prices cannot rise."

Fire Dragon Lady: "—"

Maps and Explanations

Young Merchant: "Moreover, I knew there was going to be a war. With the focus of the labour market and the economy shifting away, there's no way a satisfactory harvest can be achieved. On top of that, when people hear that I've been buying wheat like crazy, they'll jump on the bandwagon and further increase the demand of wheat from the market. That's what causes inflation."

Fire Dragon Lady: "So you're trying to artificially create a shortage of wheat? That's a bloodstained path..."

Young Merchant: "That's not actually something the Union can do, but in any case, it's an unavoidable scenario. In preparation for the war, the Landlords would have been buying up great stocks of wheat. If I stay silent, then there really will be a shortage of wheat. The most I can do is to try to discipline this shortage."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Discipline—"

Young Merchant: "That's right, it's a matter of lives here. This has a 90% success rate, but some unexpected things could occur. If the production of wheat doubles from last year, then my plan would have failed tremendously. If that happens, the Union would probably have to disband."

Fire Dragon Lady: (If that happens, there would probably be a lot of people trying to assassinate the Young Merchant. He's playing with his life here...) Young Merchant: "I don't know what you're thinking about, but don't worry. If soldiers have to risk their lives on the battlefield, it's not that far-fetched for me to do the same here.



Credits

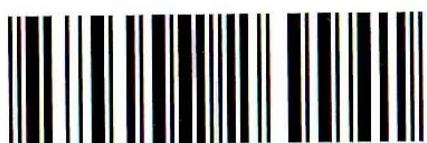
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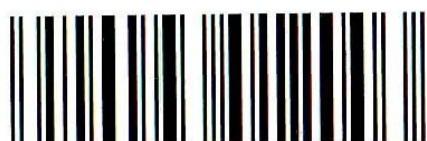
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